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POINTED
PAPERS.



THEODORE L. CUYLER, DD.



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FOR

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

BY

THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "HEART LIFE," ETC., ETC.



London:
HODDER AND STOUGHTON,
27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCLXXVIII.

141 . 22 . 727 .

*Published in England by special arrangement with
the Author.*

UNWIN BROTHERS, THE GRESHAM PRESS, CHILWORTH AND LONDON.

TO THE READER.

THE title of this Volume was suggested by an intimate friend who has long urged me to publish a series of practical papers on the Christian life,—from the soul's first step towards Jesus Christ clear onward to its final home-coming into heaven. If these chapters shall bring light to any bewildered soul, or strength to the feeble-hearted—any relief to the overloaded, or joy to the sorrowing—then my honest labour of love will not go unrewarded.

T. L. C.



CONTENTS.



	PAGE
NOT FAR OFF ...	I
TWO KINDS OF INQUIRERS...	5
BUILD FOR ETERNITY!	11
TAKE UP THY BED AND WALK ...	18
THE RETURNING DOVE ...	23
ONE HONEST HOUR WITH JESUS	29
THE CONVERSION AT THE TOLL-BOOTH	34
CHRIST AND HIS LITTLE SHIPS ...	41
FOLLOW THOU ME!	48
JESUS THE LIGHT-GIVER ...	54
JESUS THE JOY-BRINGER	61
THE SILVER SPRING, AND ITS SPIRITUAL LESSONS ...	67
AFTER CONVERSION—WHAT NEXT?	73
TEACHING BEGINNERS HOW TO WALK...	79
WHAT ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN FOR?	84
WHOLLY FOR CHRIST ...	91
THE CHRISTIAN THE WORLD'S BIBLE	97
"MASTER!"...	102
CAUTION TO CHRISTIANS	109
THE STONE THAT STOPS THE BLESSING	114
WHAT EVERY BACKSLIDER NEEDS ...	122
THE GREAT SEVENFOLD PRAYER	127

	PAGE
CHRIST AS THE SOUL'S TRUSTEE ...	132
HOW WELL JESUS KNOWS US ...	139
SEVEN THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT JESUS ...	146
HELD BY THE RIGHT HAND ...	153
"SO DID NOT I" ...	160
ROOTED BY THE RIVERS ...	166
HELP FROM THE THRONE ...	173
THE SECRET OF POWER ...	179
"LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY" ...	184
THE SOUL'S EAGLE-FLIGHT ...	189
GOD'S SINGERS ...	193
A GOLDEN MOTTO FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN ...	197
THE HANDS OF CHRIST ...	204
UPS AND DOWNS ...	209
FEAR NOT; ONLY TRUST! ...	214
THE EVERLASTING ARMS ...	220
A LIFT FOR THE OVERLOADED ...	226
GOD'S KINDNESS TO THE CRIPPLED ...	232
FOUR ANCHORS ...	238
REST FOR THE RESTLESS ...	245
REFINING THE GOLD ...	253
TIME AND PLACE FOR MEETING JESUS ...	259
THE FACE TOWARDS JERUSALEM ...	265
NEARER TO GOD ...	270
TREASURES IN HEAVEN ...	278
LIGHT AT EVENING-TIME ...	284
KNOWING OUR FRIENDS IN HEAVEN ...	291

NOT FAR OFF.

OUR Lord told a certain discreet and courteous lawyer that he was "*not far* from the kingdom of God." Whether he ever entered into that kingdom and made his calling sure, we are not informed. But there are a great many like this lawyer in all our congregations. They are not inside the ark, but they are not far away from its open door.

Every Sabbath these people are at the house of God; their constant attendance shames some irregular "fair weather" church members. They listen attentively, putting themselves within close range of the arrows of truth. They listen approvingly, and sometimes say to their pastor, "That sermon hit *me* last Sunday." They put themselves voluntarily within a good atmosphere, where they are surrounded by the presence and the prayers of God's people. I always have strong hopes of the conversion of any man or woman who will steadily

place themselves right in front of a faithful sin-denouncing and Christ-preaching pulpit and keep their ears wide open to the truth.

Yet to all such we would like to say very kindly, you are in a very dangerous position. The cross of the crucified Jesus is in full view of your eyes, and His voice of love is constantly falling upon your conscience. Many have been converted close by you. The breeze of heavenly influence has seemed to fan you as it passed so very near to your yet unconverted heart. A single "Lord ! I will follow thee," would have landed you within the kingdom long ago. Your danger is that you will trust to the very *nearness* to the doorway, and will delay the attempt to enter until it is too late. To miss the door of heaven by an ell will be your perdition. When God locked the door of Noah's ark, and shut the patriarch in, there may have been several of his neighbours within a bow-shot of the entrance. The bare thickness of that door made all the difference between being safe within or drowning in the devouring deluge. Barely to miss heaven will make hell more dreadful.

You tell me that your lives are moral. This is right and commendable. I honour you for it. It is better to be moral than immoral—better to be

chaste, and honest, and reverent, and benevolent, than to be unclean, profane, knavish, and revengeful. It is better to believe God's Word than to be a disbeliever. The fewer stains you have to be wiped away by God's pardoning grace, and the fewer bad habits you have to give up, the better for you. The minister who makes light of your honest moral life commits a rude blunder, and does shameful injustice to you and to his own office. If your Divine Lord were on earth, and were to meet you, He might very probably say to you, as He did to the polite Scribe, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." But He could not say, "Thou art *in* the kingdom." He could not say, "Thou art my disciple." Jesus never made an obedience to the last five Commandments of the Decalogue a ground of Christian discipleship or of salvation even to you, kind, amiable, and honest as you are. He would assuredly say, "Except ye repent, except ye be converted, ye cannot see the kingdom of God." Faith that trusts *on* Him alone for salvation, and not on your own respectable life, and the obedience that follows Him, are the indispensable steps to salvation. You admit that you have not taken these decisive steps. Then, however *near* you are, you are not "*in* Christ."

A man may be wrecked within a ship's length of the lighthouse. Lot's wife was not far from Zoar, yet she miserably perished. Near the summit of Mount Washington is a rude cairn of stones that marks the spot where a young lady who was overtaken by the darkness (without a guide), died of exposure and nervous fright! The poor girl was within pistol-shot of the cabin on the "tiptop;" its cheering light was just behind the rocks; yet that short distance cost her her life! So, my dear friend, you may be at last picked up *dead*, just outside the gateway of your Father's house. While its hospitable door of love stands open, hasten in! You are losing the very best part of this life, and the whole of the life to come, while you so recklessly linger away from Jesus. It will be a terrible thing to be lost—not far from heaven!

TWO KINDS OF INQUIRERS.

IN the Acts of the Apostles we read of a certain man that "he went on his way *rejoicing*." In the Gospel by Matthew we read of another man that "he went away *sorrowful*." There were certain resemblances between these two persons. They were both men of high social rank—one of them being a Jewish ruler, and the other the treasurer or chamberlain of Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians. Each of these persons appears but once upon the sacred page, and then vanishes away. That the young ruler was Lazarus is an ingenious theory, but not sufficiently well supported by facts to make it very plausible. Both these two men were sincere inquirers after salvation. The one consulted Christ Himself, the other conversed with an inspired evangelist or ambassador of Jesus. Up to this point there was a marked resemblance between the young ruler and the Ethiopian treasurer.

The difference was still more marked and vital. The traveller from Africa who had been up to Jerusalem goes back with a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures in his hand. As he sits in his chariot, he occupies his time in Bible study. The passage of the Word which he had reached was that pathetic description of the Messiah which Isaiah drew when he depicted Him as a sheep led to the slaughter, and as a lamb silent under its shearers. "Of whom speaketh the prophet this?" inquires the Ethiopian of Philip, whom he had taken up to a seat beside him in the chariot. Here is an "inquiry-meeting" extemporised on the spot. Philip, full of the new Gospel, opens his mouth and explains the passage in Isaiah as referring to that Divine Redeemer who had been lately crucified at Jerusalem. An immediate blessing attends the faithful preaching of Christ Jesus; for the soil was mellow in the lord-treasurer's heart, and the evangelist let fall the only seed that can sprout into a true regeneration. The Holy Spirit blesses his own truth. And the first evidence of conversion which we detect in the Ethiopian is a desire to be baptized. The prompt acceptance of Christ is followed by an equally prompt confession of Christ. Having given his heart to the Saviour, the new con-

vert gives Him his hand also in open alliance. He has *done his duty*, and therefore he “goes on his way rejoicing.” The tradition mentioned by Eusebius that this African nobleman became a proclaimer of the Gospel in Arabia and Ethiopia has some grounds of probability. At any rate, he became a clear, distinct light on the sacred page to guide others to the cross, and the example of his prompt confession of Christ is bright and beautiful.

The other inquirer was a light also ; but only a beacon-lantern hung up over a sunken wreck, to warn off others from the dangerous spot. That young ruler who came to Jesus, with the inquiry on his lips, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” has always been to me an object of intense interest and sympathy. We are taken with his frankness, and our highest expectations are excited that he will, like Matthew and Nathanael, promptly grasp the boon that is offered him. There is something exceedingly touching in the artless *naïvete* with which he says to Jesus, “All these commandments have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?” Scores of just such persons are to be found in our modern congregations, and in nearly every inquiry-meeting we encounter them. They desire to be saved.

They have a large "invoice" of good works to exhibit. They have rather fattened their self-esteem by feeding on the rich morsels of their own merits. Having done so much for themselves and by themselves, they stand ready to do more yet, provided they can do it in their own way.

The Omniscient Saviour read that self-righteous youth to the very bottom, and he thrust the probe into him until it touched the quick. He knew perfectly well what the ruler's besetting sin was, and just what amputation was required in order to save his soul. Selfishness was that sin. The knife must cut that out, or there was no hope of a life eternal. The prize was magnificent, and the sacrifice must be proportionate. Give up your possessions and take up a cross for me! That was Christ's close and searching test. Nothing less than that. "Follow me, and thou shalt be rich in heaven." A glorious offer; but heaven was a great way off, and the wealth of this world was just at hand, and had possession of the young ruler's *heart*. He did not so much own them as they owned him. If he had been willing to part with them, and to cast in his lot with the lowly, persecuted Son of God, he might have been immortal in the same illustrious bead-roll with Peter, the fisher of men, and Matthew,

the gatherer of tribute for the King. But alas ! he clings to his besetting sin and goes away sorrowful. As the original Greek has it, “he went away *frowning*.” Disgust at the hard terms and disgust with himself clouded his brow. The frown which lowered there was a type and a precursor of the heavier frown which is likely to meet him when he stands before that rejected Saviour, as his rejecting Judge. Dante, in his “Inferno,” pictures this unhappy young man as blown about like a withered leaf in the regions of the lost—“the shade of him who made, through cowardice, the great *refusal*.”

This phrase describes exactly the condition of thousands. They are offered a great salvation on the simple terms of quitting their own favourite sins and their own self-righteousness, and of doing God’s will. The issue is sharp and distinct. It is yes or no. “Either you must give up your bottle or give up your soul,” said a pastor to a drinking man in his parish, who was under deep conviction. Like the young ruler, he clung to his besetting sin and went away frowning.

Felix felt the probe going in very deep when Paul preached to him about chastity, while he was sitting with his adulteress by his side. He clung to his lusts, and tells his best friend to “Go away

for this time. When it is convenient, I will send for thee."

Perhaps this paragraph may fall under the eye of some one who is awakened by God's Spirit and is exceedingly anxious about his soul. The pressure of that Divine Spirit upon your conscience is to let go your sin and cleave to Christ. One or the other you must give up. You cannot keep both. The young ruler could not serve Christ and Mammon. What your besetting sin is God knoweth; but the root of it is in your heart. That heart must become Christ's, and then you too may go on your way rejoicing. To shut Christ out of the heart is to shut Him out of your life and yourself out of heaven. The loving Spirit is pressing you. Yield! Jesus calls you: "Follow me!" On your own decision hangs the alternative either to "go rejoicing" into heaven's glory at the last, or to "go away frowning" into endless self-torture and despair.

BUILD FOR ETERNITY!

DIG deep; and lay your foundations well! These words we have rung in the ears of almost every inquirer with whom we have ever conversed. In pressing this friendly admonition upon each awakened soul, we felt that we were acting in the line of God's teachings. Our Lord exhorted His hearers to build upon the rock, and not upon the quicksand. The history of about every revival furnishes a list (either longer or shorter) of those whose serious feelings prove to be evanescent. There was "feeling," and only feeling. There was no abiding faith, and no regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. And so, like "the morning cloud and the early dew," their transient impressions soon passed away. Happy is it for such if, while under this temporary seriousness, they do not enter into solemn church covenants which they cannot fulfil.

Here, then, is a danger, a most clear and

palpable danger, against which every inquirer after salvation should be faithfully warned. A seeking soul is only safe in the hands of the Divine Spirit. To learn the will of the Holy Spirit, to obey the voice of the Spirit, to co-operate with the Spirit, is the first and chief thing. If God's Spirit is so dealing with an awakened man as to give him a deeper sense of his own sinfulness and weakness, then it is an awful mistake for any Christian to speak "false peace" to that man. It sends him to a quicksand when the Spirit is so dealing with him as to lead him to Jesus the Rock. Too many inquirers are deluded with the idea that they can be saved too easily. Their own guilt, and the heinous nature of sin, and their inherent worthlessness and weakness, are not sufficiently realized. They are constantly urged to "accept Christ" before they feel a genuine need of Christ and honest desire to possess Him in their hearts. Temporary relief is all they want and all they gain. The medicine is pressed upon them before they truly apprehend their own deadly disease, and so the remedy proves to them to be only an *anodyne*. This is shallow mockery.

Against this fatal mistake that wise winner of souls, Charles G. Finney, most carefully guarded

himself and tried to guard others. So did Dr. Payson, of Portland. They both aimed to lead sinners to feel their own depravity before a holy God, to feel the wickedness of sin and its desert of a "wrath to come;" they subsoiled with the plough of Divine truth, which ripped to pieces self-righteousness and other secret sins, and turned these secrets up to the daylight. Souls thus intelligently convicted could be intelligently guided to the atoning Jesus as the pardoner and life-giver. Such thorough work made thorough converts. The great majority of them stood fire. Many of the soundest Christians of the last generation were converted to God under the wise, prayerful, and "painful" labours of Payson and Finney.

If this article falls under the eye of any awakened sinner, let me most affectionately press upon you a few vital truths. You are a sinner. God tells you that in His Word. Pray that He will discover to you your own guilt, and make you feel it. Sin is in itself an exceedingly abominable thing. Not only does it bring perdition after it, but it deserves perdition. "Against thee only have I sinned, and done this iniquity in thy sight" is the confession you ought to make. With confession of sin there must be sincere renunciation of it. As a person

who is sick of a bilious fever cannot get well until the "bad humours" are purged out of the body, so you must get the sin out of you before you are cured.

This is the Holy Spirit's work. Co-operate with Him. Entreat Him to do a thorough work upon your conscience. No matter if the process costs pain and self-humbling and tears, or wakeful nights. Do not, I entreat you, let your "hurt be healed slightly." Bible repentance involves both hatred of sin and a turning from it with honest endeavour to obey God. The more uncomfortable you feel about your own sins, the more you loathe them, the more you will realize your need of Jesus Christ. The Jewish leper understood what a scabby wretch he was when he cried out, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Bartimeus knew well the pitchy darkness around him, when he prayed so vehemently that he might receive his sight. Your soul too is leprous with guilt. Your spiritual eye has been put out by sin. Jesus alone can cleanse your evil heart; He alone can open your blind eyes. He alone can give you the new life. Here comes in the mighty meaning and the glorious efficacy of atoning blood. That alone cleanses. Jesus tasted death for you. He bore

your sins in His own body on the tree. The worse you see yourself to be, the more need that you avail yourself at once of His atonement and put yourself at once in His hands.

Coming thus to Jesus is the vital step. This is conversion when it is done with the whole heart. You are shut up to this. No other name is given whereby you can be saved. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Everything else is sand. You are building for eternity. Build to last! I have seen flimsy houses whose walls bulged and cracked; the trouble was that they were hastily run up on a worthless foundation. Some Christian professors' lives show most shocking cracks and lean over almost alarmingly. They were badly built on a bad foundation. You are working now for the judgment day, which will try every man's work of what sort it is. Dig deep and lay your foundation solidly.

"But what is meant by building on Christ?" We answer that you are to renounce all idea of saving yourself, and trust Jesus Christ to save you. As you have no strength, Jesus offers to put His infinite arms beneath you. Instead of self-gratification as the chief end of life, Jesus implants a new principle to base your life upon. He gives an

inward grace which is something more than a happy emotion : it is a controlling power to fortify you in temptation, and to hold you as an unseen anchor holds a vessel in a storm. When you sincerely embrace Jesus as your Saviour and rest on His atonement for pardon, when you look to Him for daily direction, lean on Him for support, and are joined to Him in heart-union, then you may be sure that you have got the everlasting rock-bed underneath you. Christ's work for you and His work within you is the corner-stone. On that you may build as long as you live, piling up grace upon grace, and one good deed upon another.

If Christ's work within is genuine you must be a better man or woman, more truthful, kind, honest, loving, and pure. A man cannot have Jesus in his soul and no one find it out. And if other people do not find it out, then your conversion is a hollow sham. "By their fruits" Christians must be known. The best looking tree that bears no apples is a lie. Faith without works is dead. A well-built life is a structure where tongue and hand and brain and heart are each day adding a godly word or deed, under the inspiration of Christ's love. Perfect you never will be in this world ; but oh ! how different your life would be if Jesus were

not in your heart ! Now then, my friend, make thorough work of it ; let God have His own way with you. Don't dictate to Him. Simply seek to know what Christ would have you do, and then do it. Ask Him not to let you be deceived. Test yourself by the Bible. Religion is not guess-work. Every one who becomes Christ's actually "knows whom he believes." Christ will know you. When the great day of trial comes, your foundation will be found as solid as the gates of heaven.

TAKE UP THY BED AND WALK.

WHY did our Lord single out one sufferer amid the many at the pool of Bethesda? There were a multitude of impotent folk lying in the "five porches" or colonnades, waiting for the moving of the waters. But we do not read that the Divine Healer wrought a miracle for any more than this single invalid. The reason, I conjecture, is this: no one at that pool of mercy was so pitifully unbesieged as this man. He had lain there for a long time, and been tantalized by seeing other and nimbler patients reach the healing waters before he could creep in. Others had friends to help them; but this poor forsaken creature had no one, not even a wife or child, to assist him into the pool. Suffering often makes people selfish. Perhaps, then, the loving Lord intended to rebuke the selfishness of the neglectful, as well as to show His sympathy for the neglected, by curing this one friendless cripple on the spot. There is a beautiful

lesson here for us. Beside every pool of privilege or mercy, in human life, there are one or more unbefriended sufferers, whose trials are aggravated by seeing others relieved, but no relief comes to them. Jesus teaches us to look after those who have nobody to care for them.

This is one lesson to be learned at Bethesda—which signifies the “house of mercy.” There is another lesson which we would press home upon all our unconverted readers. It fits their case exactly. In all our congregations are more or less of spiritually diseased persons, who are seen every Sabbath in God’s House of Mercy. Their disease is sin. Whether blinded by it, or lamed, or withered, or paralyzed, the root of the malady is a sinful unbelieving heart. They expect, at some time or other, to become Christians. Not one of them expects to “make his bed in hell.” Yet every one of them does lie, and persists in lying, upon a bed of criminal delay—waiting for they can hardly tell what. A word now to each of these.

One of you, perhaps, is waiting for a powerful revival, when the waters will be greatly troubled, and then you will be cured. But Christ nowhere tells sinners to wait for revivals. “*Now* is your day of salvation ;” and now does not mean to-morrow.

Jesus Christ is as close to you to-day as He ever will be. No one else can ever cure your wicked heart. Here is another unconverted person who is waiting for some "angel," in the shape of a powerful, thrilling sermon, or a peculiar providence which shall arouse you and do the needed work. You are mistaken. If you thus dictate to God, He will not do your bidding. A greater than any angel is beside you now; neither is there salvation in any other. It is not more sermons you need, nor startling providences: you need Jesus.

Another is waiting for "more conviction." How much do you require in order to accept Christ? How much did the cripple at Bethesda? If you admit that you are a sinner, and that unless Jesus saves you you will be lost, this is enough conviction to start with. To tell God that you will not serve Him until He smites you with intense sorrow for sin, is an insult: it increases your guilt. No "angel" is going to trouble your stagnant heart with healing power while you are insulting God. Nor need you wait for some wonderful conversion. To each one of you lingerers and loiterers in sin, let me say, You are cheating yourself with the devil's delusion.

Your immediate duty is all condensed into that

one pithy sentence which Jesus spake to the cripple at the pool : “ Arise, take up thy bed, and walk.” You are on your bed now. You put yourself there by your own sin. You have kept yourself there by your own choice. Every sinner is a sinner because he chooses to be, and you are no exception. Jesus commands you to repent, and trust Him, and follow Him. The moment you are willing to obey, He gives you strength to obey. Christ commanded that poor miserable creature at Bethesda, who had been “in that case” for thirty-eight years, to “stand up.” What! on those weak and withered limbs? Yes; for he could have no others to stand on. And the moment he obeys, and makes the honest attempt, a new power shoots through the nerves and muscles. The man is not lifted up. He rises up himself, and on his own limbs. But Jesus furnishes the strength. The man wanted to get up, and made a resolute effort to get up; and a supernatural power came into him, and enabled him to get up. His part in this happy transaction was *faith*; Christ’s part was *grace*. Put the two together, and you have the history of every conversion that ever took place in our world.

Now what hinders every unconverted sinner who reads these lines from being healed at once? To lie still means guilt, uneasiness of conscience, and

final death. It means a wasted life here, and hell hereafter. The first act you honestly perform to please Christ breaks the spell. The first prayer you breathe sincerely for a new heart, and the first sin you refuse because Jesus bids you, puts you on your feet. These steps are all your steps. But the Divine love moves you to take them, and gives you the sufficient strength. I heard a man pray and speak last night who for fifty years has lain on a bed of abominable impenitence. He is now walking, and walking with Jesus. His first steps were feeble and awkward. But he means, with God's help, never to go down on that mattress of sloth and unbelief again. Another man I heard at that meeting who had often lain in the stupefaction of strong drink. He took hold on Jesus' mighty hand, and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength. He is to-day "walking, and leaping, and praising God."

Here is the transcendent lesson of Bethesda. It teaches every sinner who desires salvation that all he must do is to *obey Jesus*. The "angel" you wait for will never come. Death will soon stand beside your "bed" of guilty delay. Jesus is already beside you, with His warm heart of love. His short, simple command is, "Arise, take up thy bed, and *walk*."

THE RETURNING DOVE;

OR, THE SOUL'S FLIGHT TO THE SAVIOUR.

“**T**HEN Noah put forth his hand and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.” The poor dove had found no rest for the sole of her foot. Weary with her flight, finding not a tree or bush to light on, and not a grain of food to eat, the tired bird flies back to her old home. Noah watches her as she flutters towards the open window. So he puts forth his hand and catches the weary bird, and draws her in unto him into the ark. As we look at the pretty creature, eating its seed or curling its head under its glossy wing, we fall into a meditation about that bird.

It represents to us an uneasy, wandering soul. Perhaps it is a picture of your soul, kind reader. You have long been looking for rest. You have flown a great way after it. You have tried one pursuit after another, one place after another, or

one pleasure after another ; but none of them gave you a solid and substantial repose. None of them satisfied you. Perhaps you have tried money-making ; but a full bank-book still left the soul empty. Perhaps you tried to draw one gill of pure happiness out of a cask of sensual pleasure ; but tried in vain. Perhaps you flew up on a perch of political ambition, but found yourself to be as sadly off as that eminent British statesman whose friends wished him a “Happy New Year !” “It had need to be a happier one than the last year,” replied the disappointed man ; “for I did not see one happy day in it.” Perhaps you sought in a bright home and hearthstone for a genuine heaven upon earth ; but the angel of death alighted on the couch or the crib which held your household treasures, and you discovered that you could build a house, but could not find a rest.

Even a sorer uneasiness still may be troubling you. Not only are your coveted treasures of earth unsatisfying, but your religious hopes hang on a spider’s web. You do not feel safe. You have no clear, well-grounded hope of final salvation, such as God’s inspired Word approves. You do not feel any confidence that your present mode of thinking, believing, or living, is securing for you the

highest usefulness, or can promise you a peaceful death and a glorious hereafter. "Do you feel at rest for time and for eternity?" I see you shake your head doubtfully. Then you are not at rest!

Let me tell you in one word just what you need. You need CHRIST! "Lord!" exclaimed that gifted young genius, Arthur Hallam—"Lord! I have tried how this thing or that thing will fit my spirit. I can find nothing to rest on, for nothing here hath any rest itself. Oh, Centre and Source of Light and Strength! oh, Fulness of all Things! I come back and join myself to Thee!"

He heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast."

And Hallam's soul found rest only when it returned to the Divine Satisfier, the Divine Surety, and the Divine Support.

When Noah's dove found no rest for her weary foot, what did she do? We read that she "returned into the ark." Here is your duty. God says, "Return unto me." This is both the command of the Divine Authority and the invitation of the Divine Love. When the dove returned she brought nothing but herself. So you can bring

nothing to Jesus except one poor, guilty, dissatisfied sinner. Do not bring excuses ; bring yourself. Do not bring your sins. Do not bring your self-righteous merits ; they will not pay for the transportation. Jesus only wants you. And you want Jesus. Then come to Him just as you are, and just what sin has made you—a weak, crippled, and unsatisfied sinner. The “prodigal,” in Christ’s matchless story, only brought one ragged, shoeless, hungry wretch to his father’s door ; but that was all that the good old gray-head wanted to see. Jesus wants you !

Remember that there was only one ark for Noah’s dove to fly to. Beneath it was a drowned world. Around it spread the devouring deep. So God has provided only one ark for your weary, wandering soul. “There is none other name given under heaven whereby you can be saved.” “Neither is there salvation in any other.” God has not provided a variety of religions, and left us to take our choice. He leaves us no alternative. To the prince and the peasant, to the genius and the ignorant boor, God offers alike everlasting life, through the atonement of His well-beloved SON. Jesus saves ! This is a faithful saying, and worthy of your acception, that Christ Jesus came into the

world to save sinners. And the winsome word of love He speaks to you is, "Come unto me, all ye who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Observe, too, that Noah's ark had only "one window." All the light and air came in through that one open casement. Beautifully does that single open window testify unto us the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Beautifully does it teach us that every soul which flies unto Jesus must come in through the drawing and the renewing influence of the Divine Spirit. Regeneration brings a sinner unto Christ ; and regeneration is by God's Spirit, and by Him alone.

The window is open, my friend ! The blessed Spirit is drawing you now. He is striving with you. Co-operate with Him. Go whither He leads. Whatever He bids you, do it. Quit the sins you have loved, and with eager, determined faith hasten to Christ. In fact, the coming in through that open window into the blessed fulness and grace and strength and love of the crucified Son of God is saving faith. It is not the opinion, but the act that saves your soul. When you do what the poor weary dove did—when you give over everything else in the wide universe, and just betake

yourself to the one only ark of safety, and settle down there—your first vital duty is done !

The Infinite Love will put forth His hand and draw you in. Into union with Christ ! into renewing grace and supporting strength ! into peace ! Oh, wondrous peace ! oh, sweet, satisfying peace ! oh, peace of God that passeth understanding ! No fears of death and hell invade the soul, for perfect love hath cast out fear. To every soul that enters this ark comes the assuring voice of Jesus, “Let not your heart be troubled. My peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth give I unto you.” This is the peace which the world cannot give nor take away.

ONE HONEST HOUR WITH JESUS.

WHILE conversing with an inquirer once in Mr. Moody's meeting, our chief aim was to get the young man to unloose himself from everybody and everything else, and to get close up to Jesus. The powerful sermon he had just heard in the Rink could not save him ; the friend who knelt by his side in prayer could not. Our aim was to shake him off from every floating object in his reach, and bid him lay strong hold on the Omnipotent Saviour. The salvation of every soul is to be settled directly between that soul and the atoning Jesus. Any person or thought which comes between the soul and its Saviour is a fatal impertinence.

This is the counsel we offer to every anxious seeker for pardon and peace who may read these lines. Do you really long for pardon? Then come close up to Jesus as she did, in olden time, who flung herself on His feet, and moistened them

with her tears. Confess to Him your own sins without concealment or apology. Do not spare your own favourite sins; call them by name, and implore Him to blot them out, and to give you strength to avoid repeating them. Tell Him no lies. It would be an impious falsehood for a man to confess to God the sin of gambling while he had a pack of cards in his pocket, and secretly intended to use them again. It would be a mockery to ask forgiveness for an act of dishonesty while the ill-gotten money was hidden in the purse, and not yet restored to the one who had been wronged. What right has any man to ask Jesus to forgive him, when his heart is still burning with hatred or festering with grudges against a fellow-creature? Confession, to be of any avail, must *let go of its hold* on the sin confessed. Then the lips can speak without reserve. Then the petitioner is in an honest attitude, and may hope to be heard. But while the iniquity is still harboured in the heart, God will not listen to your confession, be it ever so loud or long-continued. Come right to Jesus, and tell Him that you so loathe your sins that you have put the amputating knife to them. He will hear you then. And then you have full right to ask for the benefit of that "blood which

cleanseth from all sin." Surely you cannot expect the Lord Jesus to cleanse your heart while you are constantly defiling it afresh by a repetition of the same wicked words or thoughts or deeds.

Jesus invites honest sin-surrendering confession. No mother's arms can be so open to the erring boy who comes back to her with the sincere sobbing words, "Mother, I *did* it; forgive me, and if God help me, I will never do it again." Sinners are too apt to be afraid of Christ. You may feel quite willing to open yourself to some old friend; but to go into your room alone with Jesus Christ, and there make a clean breast of it by telling Him your guilt, and asking His forgiveness, is more than you dare do. But you commit a fearful mistake.

Sinning soul, come *nearer Jesus* ;
Come ! but come not fearing thus ;
Come with faith that trusts more freely
His great tenderness for us !

As long as you let any fear, or any doubt, or any secret hankering for sin, keep you away from the Saviour Himself, you are without hope. You will perish where you are. Christ waits for you with open ear and open hand. He asks your confidence. Every hour spent elsewhere is an hour lost. Every hour with your pastor or in an in-

quiry meeting that you spend in getting relief from human aid, is utterly wasted. It is the solemn duty of that pastor, or of the friend with whom you converse, to shake you off from clinging to their skirts or their prayers. There is such a tendency to hold to somebody else than Jesus only, that we warn you against it.

When you have honestly and penitently sought out Christ and confessed your sins to Him, and put yourself wholly in His hands, then *stay there*. Follow Him. Keep close to Him, and Him alone. In your store, in your shop, in your field, in your home, or wherever you are, be ever saying, "Now, Jesus, lead me! Teach me Thy way! Hold fast to my hand! Keep my conscience quick and active, and my will in submission to Thy will! If my old sins come back to tempt me, then give me the grace to resist."

This is Bible-religion—this is doing all that you possibly can "do to be saved." These steps exhaust the Divine requirement. Paul must have meant just this when he commanded the inquirer to "trust on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." A vague idea is floating before many minds that if certain famous preachers come to preach or sing to them, or if certain services are

attended in their own town or church, they will receive some undefined benefit. This is a delusion. Reader! Jesus, the Atoning Lamb of God, the Sin-Pardoner, the Life-Giver, is within your reach to-day. Come close up to Him, and lay a heart-hold on Him. Sooner or later you must do that, or be for ever lost. *One honest hour with Jesus* may be the first step towards an eternity of glory.

THE CONVERSION AT THE TOLL- BOOTH.

THERE are very few startling religious experiences recorded in the New Testament. There is, indeed, one case of awakening which has much that was dramatic in it—the case of the jailer at Philippi. There was one most extraordinary conversion, as by a lightning flash, on the highway to Damascus. Paul was the most extraordinary human character in the early Church. His regeneration was accompanied by some wonderful phenomena. But if there had been no other awakenings recorded except the one by an earthquake, and no other conversions recorded except the one by a “light from heaven” and a supernatural voice, we ordinary people might be perplexed and discouraged. We might be left to wait—and to wait in vain—for something “sensational” to come upon us. Instead of that, we find that the spiritual transformations described in the

New Testament were commonly produced in the most quiet, normal way—by calm appeals to the reason and the conscience.

The direct appeals made by our Lord and Saviour were eminently of that character. When Lot was to be hurried out of Sodom, threatened with a shower of fire, it was well that the heaven-sent messenger should lay hands on him and urge him to “escape for his life!” But we do not read that Jesus Christ was accustomed to walk through the streets of Capernaum and Jerusalem shouting to the people: “Escape for your lives!” He fully realised the guilt and the dangers of the unconverted around him, yet He knew the best way to reach these unconverted sinners—by calmly addressing their reason, their moral sense, and their affections. He convicted the erring woman of Sychar by applying the truth to her conscience. He reached Zaccheus by a personal kindness to him—by going to dine with him, even though he was an unpopular publican. His usual formula was a very short and simple one. It consisted of two words, “*Follow me.*” This brief formula He used in the cases of Andrew, of Philip, of Peter, of the two sons of Zebedee, and it is quite probable that the same words were addressed to the other apostles.

We are not informed that the spiritual change wrought in any of the twelve disciples was accompanied by any powerful emotional agitation, either of deep distress or of sudden ecstasy. It is only in modern days that the idea has been held forth that a true change of heart and life must be evidenced by pungent distress, followed by a rapturous relief. Many a genuine conversion has been attended by the anguish of deep conviction and the rapture of a sudden joy, but we doubt whether a majority of the best Christians now living had precisely this experience. For a sinner to *wait* for such an experience, or to *demand* it from God before he will obey the Divine voice, is both madness and presumption.

There is one case of conversion narrated in the Bible which is peculiarly instructive and encouraging to what Abraham Lincoln used to call "the plain people." The man who was converted was not a genius, but one of ordinary natural abilities. He was not a comet, but a very steady and modest fixed star. The most remarkable thing about him was that he belonged to a very odious order of men—the tax-collectors for the Roman masters of Palestine. So keenly were Jewish patriotism and religion wounded by the foreign

domination of the Cæsars, that every penny paid to a publican was paid with a grudge and a growl. The Jews had a proverb : "Take not a wife out of the family where there is a publican, for they are *all* publicans."

One day Jesus, in the course of His walk from Capernaum by the seaside, came across one of these detested publicans, sitting under his toll-booth. The toll-booth was a sort of Oriental custom-house. Not a permanent building, but a mere shed or booth by the roadside. The one near Capernaum must have been at the junction of the roads leading to several important towns. The customs collector who sat there waiting for tribute was a Jew. His name, Levi, marks his nationality. His father's name was Alpheus. Our Lord must have seen something in that man who sat at the toll-booth which made him the man for His purpose. The fact that his business was unpopular constituted no bar in the way of that unworldly Messiah who could "evoke a Christian holiness out of the midst of heathen corruption." Jesus was probably no stranger to Levi. The wondrous miracles of Jesus must have reached the publican's ear; perhaps some of the Divine words of Jesus also. Levi was waiting for the call. It came in the most

simple and intelligible language: "Follow me." This showed that Christ loved him and wanted him. This appeal was enough to kill his covetousness and to change the current of his life. He "left all, rose up, and followed him"—touched by the electric finger of a forgiving and renewing grace. From that time onward he is known as Matthew, which signifies "a gift of God."

What did Matthew leave? Certainly not his property, immediately, for we find him giving an hospitable entertainment to Jesus at his house. He left his old calling, with all its odious profits. He left his old spiritual errors. He left his sinful, worldly life behind. He found instead of these a new calling. His knowledge of the art of writing he consecrated afterwards to the preparation of that first Gospel which bears his name. He found peace of conscience. He found a field of holy and honoured toil in the new kingdom. He found a Friend. He found an everlasting inheritance among the saints in light and glory.

Unconverted reader, do not you think that was a wise choice made that day at the toll-booth? Could you make a better one than he made? Imagine what would have been Matthew's future if he had said "no," instead of "yes," at the toll-booth. Who would have ever heard of him? Some

one else might have stood where he stands, in the golden portals of the New Testament, but it would not have been Matthew the Apostle.

Remember, too, that the publican was a plain, every-day man, working on in an even, level line of service. He was not an extraordinary character, nor was he converted amid a convulsion of excitement. He did not wait for a Pentecost. All the more is his case a model for your imitation. You are not an extraordinary character, and there may be no unwonted revival influence striking in upon you. Most of the converts in the New Testament came into Christ's kingdom without such external pressure. Certainly, Matthew was in the ordinary attitude of his every-day life. And right there, under the influence of the Divine call, he decided for Christ. So can you. He acted from motives, not transient impulse. His reason was convinced; his conscience was in the step. Christ's love awakened love in him. These are all vital points in solid, enduring conversions. And there is nothing in the world but your own stubborn, foolish, selfish *will* that keeps you from having the precious gift of *life*—life *everlasting*—which Matthew that day accepted. You are only required to give up what is wrong. You are only commanded to do what is right. You are to give up living for

yourself, and begin to live for God, which means also to live for the good of others. You must quit your besetting sins, and do it voluntarily. The publican "rose up." This implies immediate action. It was now or never with him. So must you act with prompt obedience. He did the first thing Jesus bade him do. Are you willing to do as much? If not, you are deciding against Christ, and that means *death*!

The chief thing which Matthew did was to "follow" Jesus. He did not lead or dictate. He had no track of his own, but chose to walk in Christ's. Precisely so must it be with you, if you would attain the Christian's peace, the Christian's power, the Christian's hope, and the Christian's heaven. Christ goes before you. Follow Him. He gives you His Word. Study and obey it. Do not linger at your toll-booth of a selfish, guilty, worldly life. Death will find you there by-and-by, and cut you down in your sins. Then comes the judgment. Up to that hour at the toll-booth Levi's life was *chaff*; thenceforth it was *wheat*. The chaff was for the burnings; the wheat went into the garner. Your life, out of Christ, is chaff: it will go into the flames of hell. Obey Jesus, follow Him, and your remaining life will be golden grain for the harvest of heaven. Will you?

CHRIST AND HIS LITTLE SHIPS.

JESUS is often presented to us as the Captain of our salvation. The weapons of our warfare are furnished from His armoury. But in one striking scene He appears as our Admiral, conducting His fleet, through storm and darkness and peril, to the desired haven. The scene is described by the Evangelist Mark, and it illustrates several points of Christian experience most admirably.

At the close of one of His busiest days of labour, our Lord finds Himself on the eastern shore of Lake Gennesareth. He says to His followers, "Let us cross over unto the other side." This is substantially the invitation to every unconverted soul. For there are two "sides" in life—a wrong side and a right side—a side on which Satan reigns, and a "Lord's side," where His Word is a light unto the footsteps. On one side lies guilt, and over it hangs the cloud of condemnation. No man can

be on both sides, if he try ever so hard. Woe be unto him if his professions place him on the Lord's side, while his affections and his conduct are on the side of the enemy.

When Jesus commands a soul to follow Him, He furnishes not only the test of faith, but the touch-stone of character. These two all-comprehensive words—"follow me"—were Christ's most common formula to those yet outside of the kingdom. They were at once His awakening appeal, His direction to the inquiring heart, and His "confession of faith" and rule of daily conduct. True religion is simply following Christ. The more closely our modern Churches conform their standards of doctrine to this brief, vital core-truth, the more orthodox will they become, and the less will they be rent into factions and distracted with schisms. The true "Evangelical Alliance" will always crystallize around Christ's person as the one only Leader, and Christ's cross as the one only ground of salvation. No one can follow Christ and Satan at the same moment. No one can follow Christ until he breaks with his old habits and cuts loose from his besetting sins. Here comes the pinch. The young ruler never would have gone away sorrowful if Jesus had allowed him to compromise, by

holding on to this world's treasures and securing everlasting treasures also. Jesus demanded that he should cut loose from his selfishness, and go over unto the "other side." Christ draws sharp lines and allows no neutralities. I do not read of any place in heaven for neutrals.

On that evening by the lake shore the company had to decide at once whether they would remain in Gennesareth or embark with Jesus for the other side. Observe that He does not send His disciples off alone. He foresaw danger ahead, and goes with them. Never yet has our loving Lord commanded a sinner to forsake his life of sin, or a believer to embark in any enterprise of benevolence, or venture on a mission for the right, however perilous or storm - provoking, without the assurance, "I am with you always." Where we cannot take Christ with us we should never venture. This is the unfailing test as to the rightfulness of our business pursuits and our social amusements.

Mark tells us that Jesus was not left to cross the lake alone. There "were with him also other little ships." Mere fishing-boats, of course, but each one had its passengers. Christ is the Admiral in command, and the vessels must keep within

hail of Him, as well as of each other. Their safety does not depend on the size of the boat, but on the seamanship and the Divine protection of the Commander. It was not a fleet of colossal war-galleys that the Saviour convoyed that night, but a flotilla of fishing-smacks. I may be voyaging to eternity in a little boat ; but, however humble be the craft, it contains my immortal hopes. Only here and there is a great galley to be seen, with its banks of oars. But the tiniest skiff that bears a child's soul, or is freighted with the humblest disciple's little all, is just as surely under our Commander's eye as if it were a royal argosy. We are safe even in a little boat when Jesus keeps watch over it. Many a seventy-four, manned with self-righteousness, has foundered in the deep ; but heaven's harbour will be covered with little boats that our Commander has piloted home through storm and darkness.

That was a night of tempest and panic through which Christ brought His flotilla to the other side. He never promises smooth water to His followers. Nor is His Church a vast assemblage of tow-boats, pulled along by the sheer power of the Divine Will. Each Christian has his own oar of personal responsibility to pull, and his own rudder of con-

science to steer with, and must "work his passage" as a free agent. A hard pull had the oarsmen in the little boats on that memorable night-voyage over Galilee. The fierce waves washed over even into the vessel that carried the Captain of our salvation. To test the faith of His crew to the utmost, He lies down to slumber on the stern-beam of the boat. Poor, frightened creatures! How like you and me they acted when they gave up all for lost, and screamed in the Master's ear: "Lord! Lord! carest thou not that we perish?" Every little boat in the fleet may have had some trembling hands on board during that midnight hurricane. Here snaps an oar, and there a tremendous sea lurches over the gunwale. Peter and John must have recalled that stormy night often when they were passing through their tempestuous experiences in after years.

My dear brethren, you and I will often recall many dark hours of trial over surging seas and through head-winds of opposition after we get home to glory. More than one will look back, and see how close he ran to the rocks, and what hair-breadth escapes he made when he "struck a light" with the tinder and steel of prayer. I expect to meet some mariners up yonder who were half

drowned pretty often, and had their sea-biscuit well soaked in the brine.

Nay, more. We doubt whether the fleet on Galilee would have weathered through that tempest if Jesus had not been in the midst of them. Their extremity was His opportunity. The Owner of the winds had the power to subdue them. Never does Satan raise a tempest which Jesus cannot quell. How sublimely goes that voice of might out through the howlings of the hurricane ! “ Peace ! be still ! ” In an instant the howl hushes to a whisper, and the maddened billows die down into a calm. Oh, my soul ! why art thou so often disquieted within thee ? How is it that thou hast so little faith ? Wilt thou never learn that Jesus has even the least of His little boats always under His watchful eye, and all the winds and the waves *obey Him* ?

The other side is reached at last. And not a single vessel that sets out with Jesus and keeps near to Jesus perishes in the storm. The morning light shines sweetly on dripping sail and moored mariner in the celestial harbour. So He bringeth us to our desired haven. Beautiful were the words of that dying Christian who overheard some one say, in low tones, by her bedside : “ She cannot live long ; she is sinking fast.”

“No, no,” exclaimed the departing soul, “I am *not sinking!* I am going into the harbour, and Jesus is with me!” To the voyagers even on the least of all His “little ships” will our Divine Commander say: “Where I am, there shall ye be also.”

“FOLLOW THOU ME!”

WHAT a motto for every-day use our dear Master gave us all when He said to Peter, “What is that to thee? Follow thou me!” It fits so many cases. Here, for example, is an obscure, hard-working pastor, who reads in his religious journal of the wonderful successes of a Moody or a Spurgeon—how one of them preaches every Sunday to six or seven thousand auditors, and how the other is blessed to the conversion of several thousands of souls in a single year. He throws down the paper in a sort of envious despair, and feels that he is an absolute nobody in the vineyard of Christ. “What is all that to thee?” whispers the Shepherd’s voice. “Follow thou me!” Ashamed of himself, the humble country pastor turns to his Bible and his unfinished sermon again, determined that he will do his little *best*, even though his name never figures in the bulletins. If the Master smiles on him, it is enough. To save even one soul is reward for a lifetime’s toil.

How often a self-distrustful Christian tries to excuse himself from active labours in the church or Sunday-school with the stereotyped apology: “If I were gifted like A or B, I would be as active as they are in teaching, or in public prayer or speech.” Friend, the way to attain to larger gifts is to employ the gifts you have. Give Jesus thy one talent, and then He may trust thee with two. If you cannot speak glibly in a prayer-meeting, then stammer out your heart’s thanks in the best fashion you can. It may be that your few broken words may accomplish more than another man’s fluent harangue. I had an old disciple once in my Church I would rather hear stutter out ten sentences than hear some others expatiate for an hour. He was a man who lived in “close grups” with Jesus. If you have no brilliant or thrilling experience to relate in the social meeting, then tell the honest story of how you do feel and what you are striving after. It is always a satisfaction to hear a man speak the *truth*. Christ judges His servants according to what they have, never according to what they have not.

There is a gentle rebuke, too, of our murmuring discontent in those words of our Lord. Perhaps some poverty-stricken brother who reads this paragraph has an uprising of the old Adam in him

every time he goes to church. He sees Judge A drive up in his fine carriage, or Elder B come in with his richly-dressed wife and daughters, and mutters to himself, "How is it that other people get up in the world so, while I can hardly keep a coarse coat on my back?" What is all that to thee, brother? Follow thou Him who had not where to lay His weary head. If thou art not rich, thou hast not the temptations of wealth, and never will be called to give account of a large stewardship. It is hard to be poor; it is hard to fall behind in life's race, and see others pull up triumphantly to the goal; it is hard to lose our only wee lamb, while our neighbour has his table crowded with a group of rosy-cheeked children. But methinks the Elder Brother draws up very close to such, and puts the arm of His love about them, and says very sweetly, "What is all this to thee, my child? Thou art mine. If mine, then an heir of heaven's glory. Where I am thou shalt be. Let not thy heart be troubled. Whom I love I chasten. What is this poverty, or failure, or bereavement to thee? *Follow thou me*, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. If thy feet are sore, follow me, and the green pastures will be all the softer by-and-by. If thy cross is heavy, let me share it with thee."

Patience, my child. The Saviour's feet were worn,
Thy Saviour's heart and hands were weary here,
His garments stain'd and travel-worn and old,
His vision blinded with the pitying tear.

Shall the disciple be above his Master, or the servant expect to be above his Lord?

This passage also has its application to all those unfavourable surroundings in which we are often placed. It is not an easy thing to be an out-and-out Christian in certain families or in certain social circles. It was not an easy thing for Daniel to be a God-fearing Puritan in voluptuous Babylon, or for Paul to stand up for Jesus at the court of Felix. Perhaps some of you say, “My ‘set’ are worldly and fashionable. They go to theatres oftener than to prayer-meetings. My relatives are irreligious. The current is against me.” Very well. What is that to thee? Follow thou Christ. If your associates are possessed with the delusion that happiness is only to be found in sensual pleasures, then prove to them how cheerful you can be while denying ungodly lusts. If those among whom your lot is cast are frivolous, do you be sober. If they are extravagant, do you be frugal, “as becometh the saints.” If they live for self-indulgence, do you set the example of living for Christ and for others’

welfare. If they choose death, do you choose life, and then prove to them the wisdom of your choice. "Be ye holy, as I am holy," is a command you cannot shirk or defy but at a terrible cost. Oh! it is a shame to us who profess Christ that we so often ask, "What will this one say? or how do others do?" Follow ME! This is the true "higher life," this perpetual endeavour to find Christ's footsteps and to walk therein.

When the grand old missionary, Judson, was one day laid aside from work, his wife thought to divert him by reading to him some newspaper sketches of himself. One compared him to Paul, another to John, &c. The modest old hero was annoyed, and exclaimed, "I do not want to be like Paul, or Apollos, or any other man. I want to be like Christ. We have only One who was tried in all points as we are, and yet was without sin. I want to drink in His spirit, to place my feet in His footprints, and to measure their smallness and shortcomings by Christ's footsteps only. Oh, if I could only be more like Jesus!"

If our Churches are to be quickened and advanced, then the marching orders to which we must keep step is, "Follow me!" The only safe counsel for the inquiry-room is to point every awakened

sinner to the atoning Jesus. The two words which Jesus probably uttered oftener than any other were “Follow me!” They are the essence of all true creeds. They are the test and touchstone of true Christianity.

THE LIGHT-GIVER.

A PLAIN, coarsely-clad man, from the north country of Galilee, is seated in the treasury-court of the Temple at Jerusalem. A portion of the crowd who have come up to the Feast of Tabernacles is gathered round him. Among them leer out several malicious Pharasaic faces and contemptuous scowls of the Rabbis. Beside the company stand two colossal candelabra, fifty cubits high, and overlaid with flashing gold. These, when lighted, throw a brilliant illumination over the whole Temple area.

Pointing, probably to these gigantic lamps, the plain peasant from Nazareth says, with modest dignity, "I **am** the light of the world." A look of pity or contempt steals over the countenances of the Jewish auditors as they listen to such an astounding assertion. Yet He, the derided Nazarene, who had led up a band of fishermen to the capital, knew that He was to be the illuminator of the

whole globe, and bathe all its continents in spiritual glory. Other teachers were but torches, soon to burn out. He was the Divine Sun that should yet "light every man that cometh into the world." The ferocious bigots at Jerusalem fancied that they had put out the light when they slew Him on the cross; but in millions of hearts and homes His warm radiance is felt to-day. No word describes our beloved Lord more perfectly than this one—the Light-Giver to humanity.

1. It is the office of light to reveal, and Jesus reveals God to us. The conception of an infinite, omnipresent spirit is too vast for us to grasp. But a child can look at God when personated and condensed, as it were, in the form of Jesus Christ. The words of Christ alone can explain God to us, to the humblest of us. The sacrificial death of Christ explains God's justice, and His ineffable love wedded unto that justice. Without the flood of discovery which Jesus pours upon the Divine attributes we never could have "found out God." He has revealed to us man's guilt as it could not otherwise be known. In the broad glare of Calvary's cross, sin becomes exceeding sinful and deserving of perdition. Jesus has revealed the pathway to heaven, and poured upon that straight

and narrow road the noontide of guidance and bright encouragement. Take out of this sin-cursed world to-day the light which has beamed into it from that plain, persecuted Man of Nazareth, and all its multitudinous peoples would be shrouded in a spiritual midnight.

2. Coming down from this broad generalization to a personal view, we discover that Jesus is the light of life to me and to every other immortal soul that consents to accept and follow Him. When I am perplexed about any question of duty, I have but to inquire, What has Jesus said? What would He have me do? Whither does His own example point? Here is every Christian's infallible guide. Here is an unerring rule of duty. When any professing Christian is afraid or ashamed to bring his conduct into the searching light of Christ's direct teachings, that Christian may feel perfectly sure that he is in the wrong. It is not necessary that a man should shirk the light in order to convict himself. If, when he brings his decisions and his doings close up to the revealing light of Christ's example, "his deeds are reproved," then the sooner he condemns himself the better. If he does not find the light of Christ's approval over the doorway of any resort for pleasure, let him

turn back straightway. If, when he subjects his ledgers and day-books to Christ's rules of right, he discovers that they will not stand the test, let him rest assured that his business is dishonestly conducted. He does not need any other auditor of his accounts than his Holy Master. Not a single one of the disgraceful defalcations that have been traced back to dishonoured Church members could ever have occurred if these Church members had first subjected their transactions to the ordeal of Christ's injunctions. Not a single Christian ever stumbles or falls until he has put out the light which Christ has given him. For our Lord has distinctly assured us that whoso "*followeth me shall never walk in darkness.*" Oh ! what a friend we have in Jesus. How many a pang of remorse, how many a blush of shame, how many a bitter cup of contrition we should spare ourselves, if we would simply lay our every thought and plan and purpose open to our loving Master !

Oh ! what peace we often forfeit,
 Oh ! what needless pain we bear ;
All because we do not carry
 Everything to Him in prayer.

3. It is also the office of light to quicken. The ivy that is placed in the depths of a dark

cellar turns pale and dies. But let a ray of sunlight stream in upon it, and the ivy will at once feel a new life shoot through its fibre, and will clamber toward the open window. Sunlight is as essential to vegetation as warmth or water. And the manifest reason why so many Christians are stunted is that they attempt to live in the dark cellar of unbelief. They grope away from His bright warm countenance into the damp darkness of their own gloomy thoughts and fears, and into their own self-reliances, instead of dwelling under Christ's "open face." He is the light of *life*. His spirit imparts life, His fellowship kindles joy, His promises bestow comfort, His approving smile could make John Bunyan sing in a prison cell. And even when we have sinned, if we would but bring our hearts, with honest contrition, into the light of Christ's countenance, we might receive the welcome assurance, "Go thy way. Thy sins are forgiven thee." Many a sermon has been preached and many a treatise has been written to instruct God's people how to grow in grace. But the gist of every sound sermon or essay might be condensed into the single short injunction to live in the quickening sunshine of Christ's countenance. Cheerful old Paul gives the secret of his growth,

his strength, and his joy, when he says: "It is not I, it is Christ that liveth in me." He exhorts his brethren, who some time were darkness and now were light in the Lord, to walk as children of the light. Not one of them could grow while in the dungeon of unbelief and estrangement from Christ.

4. I need not protract this paper to set forth the palpable and precious truth that Jesus is the only Light-Giver for dark hours of affliction. A rainbow, with all its polychromatic splendours, is nothing but sunlight playing upon a background of storm. A Christian's joy in sorrow is simply the reflection of Christ's smile of love upon the cloud. If no sun, then no rainbow. If Jesus be hidden, then hope disappears. If Jesus depart, how great is that darkness !

The most heaven-like spots I have ever visited have been certain rooms in which Christ's disciples were awaiting the summons of death. So far from being a "house of mourning," I have often found such a house to be a vestibule of glory. At this moment I recall a gifted young woman, whose dying bed seemed to be spread in the very land of Beulah. Her whole soul overflowed with radiance. Almost the last words she uttered were: "My road through

the valley has been long, *but it is bright all the way.*" Jesus shone through the gloom, and death's vain shadows fled before Him. Heaven's morning broke ere life's sun had set. Jesus had been to her the light of life in this world. And when her emancipated spirit entered the realms of glory, her first discovery must have been—as it was revealed to the seer of Patmos—that "the Lamb is the light thereof."



JESUS THE JOY-BRINGER.

TEN men—perhaps others with them—are assembled on a certain night in an upper room in Jerusalem. If that room were still in existence, it might well be considered the most sacred apartment on the globe. Its doors are shut that night, for enemies are about. The doors open once to admit two brethren, who come to them with cheering news from Emmaus. Still they feel sad and lonesome ; some are utterly cast down by unbelief. Did the door open again ? Or was it through the closed doors, by a miracle, that the longed-for Guest enters among them ? No matter which way He comes. He is here ! In actual flesh and blood, for He challenges them to “handle” His scarred form, that they may be sure He is not a mere apparition ! It is too good to be true. They break out into such delight that it quite upsets their faith, for Luke tells us that “they believed not for joy, and wondered.” But

He sits down among them, and eats of their fish and honeycomb in the old familiar manner. He pronounces upon them His benediction. He breathes upon them fresh spiritual power, after their late demoralizing panic and desertion. "Then were the disciples *glad* when they saw their Lord." His predictions are verified. They are no longer bereaved. Jesus is among them, the same Divine Friend, Teacher, Comforter, and Redeemer.

I love to study this scene. Through it, as through a window, shines in the inspiring truth that Jesus is a *Joy-Bringer*. There is no greater mistake than to present Christ, our elder Brother, to mankind in too sombre an aspect, as the Man of sorrows and mainly as the righteous condemner of sin. Rather should we present Him as both loathing sin and loving the sinner. Just turn to the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, and read the passage which He expounded Himself in Nazareth's synagogue, as the inspired description of His own character and mission. To preach good tidings to the meek and liberty to the captive, to bind up the broken-hearted, to comfort all that mourn, and to give the oil of joy for sorrow—this was His errand from the skies. He came into the world not to

condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. The cross brought agony to Jesus, but joy to the universe.

In how many ways is our Saviour a bringer of gladness ! Every sinner as soon as he feels the sting of his guilt becomes miserable. That sting he cannot extract with his own hand, and while it remains it rankles. Nothing cuts and kills like sin. No wretchedness is so wretched as that of a soul convicted by God's Spirit. There is a story of a rich Eastern master whose most skilful artisan began to fall off in his work. The master spoke to his steward about it. The steward replied : "It is no wonder that the poor fellow cannot turn out good work. His hands tremble so that he cannot manage his tools ; his eyes are so full of tears often that he cannot see what he is about. A heavy debt is pressing him, so that he even drinks to drown his sorrow. While that debt remains you need not expect him to produce any more good work." "Then," replied the generous master, "go and tell him that his debt is paid." From that hour the artisan was a changed man. His tears were dried, and he plied his tools with a happy heart : his work was done better than ever before.

A guilty soul can never work for God or enjoy

any lightsomeness until its terrible debt to the Divine justice is paid and the condemnation of sin is lifted off. The atoning blood of Jesus pays the debt of every penitent sinner that trusts in Him. When Christ comes into the heart, light and joy enter like the rays of the morning.

The Saviour smiles. Upon my soul
New tides of joy tumultuous roll;
His voice proclaims my pardon found,
Seraphic transport wings the sound.

Earth has a joy unknown to heaven—
The new-born peace of sins forgiven;
Tears of such pure and deep delight,
Ye angels, never dimm'd your sight.

It is not only the new convert to whom Jesus is a Joy-Bringer. He is the best of comforters to every believer in his troubles. Ah ! my brother, there is an “upper room,” an *inner* chamber, of which you and I surrender the key only to the dearest friend. It is the heart’s sanctum, with which the stranger intermeddleth not. Sometimes that inner room becomes dark and dreary and lonesome. The lights burn low and the air is heavy. ONE enters through the closed doors. How sweetly sounds His voice of love: “Peace be unto you !” He shows us the scars of His sacrifice for us. He

opens to us the casket of His precious promises. At such times of communion with Jesus we do not give Him "the honeycomb." He gives it unto us, and it drops sweetness on our bruised spirit. His consolations fill the room with their choice perfume. We lie in His arms, as the beloved disciple did; His right hand is under our head and His left hand doth embrace us. We can say, with happy assurance: "My beloved is mine, and I am his. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth whom I desire besides thee." There is no sweeter, stronger fellowship with Jesus than to bring our troubles to Him. He liftst hem off, and grants the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Then are we *glad* when we see our Lord.

The more we have of Christ's presence the more serenely peaceful we become. An empty heart is always wretched. Riches, fame, worldly success, never fill the inner chamber of an immortal being. After counting them up, the sad heart asks: "Is this *all?*" But the Christian inventories his treasures, and exclaims, "Christ is mine! I am an heir to the inheritance that never fadeth away!" Joy is simply love looking at its treasures. A Christian's joy is in clasping Christ and looking

forward to the hour when he shall be like Him and see Him as He is.

The glory of heaven will be in seeing Jesus. "A little while and ye shall see me, because I go unto my Father." "Where I am ye shall be also." When we return home after a long absence, it is not the house or the furniture or fireside that awaken our joy. It is meeting the loved ones. If they have gone, every forsaken room or empty chair is an agony. So in our Father's house it will not be the pearl gate or the streets of gold that will make us happy. But oh! how transcendently glad will we be when we *see our Lord!* If we ever weep in heaven, it will be tears of joy at meeting Jesus. Perhaps in that "upper room" also He may show unto us His hands and His side, and we may cry out, with happy Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"



THE SILVER SPRING,

AND ITS SPIRITUAL LESSONS.

I AM sitting on this March day under a warm golden sunshine by the banks of the Silver Spring, in Florida. For several hours our little steamer threaded its tortuous way up the Ocklawahaw, amid dense forests of cypress and palmetto. The venerable cypresses, with their flowing grey beards of moss, gave a sombre gloom to the scenery. Suddenly our boat turned off into the bright and beautiful Silver Creek, where the water is so perfectly transparent that we seemed to be floating on air. Eight miles of this translucent navigation brought us to the fountain-head of the crystal creek in this marvellous Silver Spring. It is not only the gem of Florida, but one of the wonders of American scenery. I bend over the side of our little boat and look sheer down forty feet, and the shell-covered bottom seems only an arm's-length off. A penny lying on the bottom

is distinctly visible, and the handwriting on the envelope of a letter is plainly seen! Not one particle of gross earth sullies the pellucid purity of this deep cool spring, which is itself the birth-place of yonder fast-flowing little river.

As I look down into the magic mirror that reflects the tree-tops, I begin to repeat to myself these words: "He showed me a pure river of water of life, *clear as crystal*, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." These words set me upon a meditation. If our Master were beside this bright fountain to-day, with His disciples, what a parable He would draw out of these pearly depths! He found His texts everywhere. Looking at the golden pitcher which the priests used in the temple, He cried aloud, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink! He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." No emblem was more often employed by the Great Teacher, and in the descriptions of heaven itself we are led beside the living waters.

The first thing that strikes me here to-day is the fulness of the fountain. This Silver Spring sends forth a body of water that amounts to more than a hundred hogsheads in a minute. The issuing

creek is always full to the brim. Midsummer heats never diminish it. Beautiful emblem of that fulness of mercy in God that furnishes redemption for all sinners who seek it, and of that fulness of grace in Christ Jesus for the myriads of His disciples ! We run dry when we cut off our heart-connection with Jesus. This is the secret of the spiritual declension of many a church-member. He is out of communion with Christ. He no longer draws by prayer and by the activities of faith from the Great Reservoir. "Because I live, ye shall live also." As soon as a Christian finds himself growing dull and dry, as soon as he loses his relish for his Bible and his closet, his prayer-meeting, and the active duties to which he pledged himself, let him take the alarm. He has " forsaken the living fountain, and is hewing out for himself a broken cistern, that holds no water." He is attempting to live on the mire and dregs of a dried-up experience. The water is not there. The recovery of such a backslider is not to be secured by the prayers of the Church, or the preaching of his pastor, or by the advent of a "revivalist ; " but by the return of his own soul to his own Saviour. He must go back to Christ in humble confession, and establish a new connection

with Jesus, as the one only Fountain of all grace and strength. A genuine and powerful revival in a Church is simply the outwelling of a Silver Spring from the hearts and lives of Christ's brotherhood, and the outflow makes a blessed irrigation of the surrounding community. If Christians kept in constant communion with their Fountain-Head, there would be no necessity for a revival. Oh, my soul ! may thy every vein be filled with this quickening flow, so that my leaf be ever green, and my life be like yonder orange-tree, laden with golden fruit !

2. The next truth that bubbles up from this crystal spring is that the purity of the stream comes from the purity of the fountain. As we sailed up the Silver Creek, we observed that the whole stream was transparent as glass until it mingled with the more turbid waters of the Ocklawahaw. So the life of a true child of God is pure and holy as long as it flows out of Christ. This is the only "higher life." As soon as a Christian runs into conformity with the world his conduct becomes riled and muddy. His whole life is discoloured. He has ceased to be "peculiar and separate from sinners." The sand and slime of a sinful world are too much for the crystalline character which

grace begets, and he becomes polluted. The word "sincere" signifies transparent. His clear honesty of purpose, and purity of aim, and singleness of heart for Christ's glory, are all muddled with a new unclean contamination. He is no longer holy. Nobody "comes thither to draw" from him, as I see the people come and fill their buckets from this sweet cool spring. He cannot purify and refresh others, for he is not clean himself. He has not the crystal quality of that stream that floweth out of God and the Lamb. It is a suggestive fact that, in proportion as Christians ally themselves to sin and the sinful, in the same degree do sinners draw away from them when they want help and spiritual good. "Keep thyself pure!"

I observe, too, how free this silver fountain is. Yonder poor negro freedwoman fills her bucket from the cool spring. Our New York nabob, who has come to visit the wonderful waters, quaffs a delicious tumbler also. The same fact I observe in Brother Moody's multitudinous meetings. Rich and poor, cultured and illiterate, are cleansed by the same atoning stream from Christ. They all drink, too, of Him with the same relish. Ho! every one that thirsteth! come ye to the waters! No man perishes for want of an atonement. None

need die of thirst while the well-spring gushes out from Calvary.

I cannot see whence this wonderful spring issues. Its source is invisible. The water steals in quietly and without cessation. So, blessed Jesus, may Thy unseen Spirit feed the depths of my inmost heart with perennial grace, and love, and courage, and holy joy; and then shall my life become more like unto that celestial stream that proceedeth out of the throne of our enthroned and glorious Head!

AFTER CONVERSION—WHAT NEXT?

THE religious journals have been filled for several months past with the welcome reports of widespread revivals. These have been often spoken of as *harvest* seasons in the various Churches. But the phrase is an erroneous and misleading one. Conversion is rather a planting-time with a soul than its "harvest." It is a beginning of better things, not a consummation completed. Those pastors and evangelists commit a fearful mistake who feel that the conversion of sinners is the one main object of all gospel effort; whereas conversion is only the means, the essential first step to the great end of all true gospel effort, which is the service of God by a genuine godly life. Those young converts make a still worse mistake if they sit down happy and contented with having "confessed Christ" and united with His Church. The clock that strikes one is expected to strike two.

What is conversion? It is a turning from the

wrong road into the right one. The journey is yet to be performed before heaven is attained. Too many, alas ! set out on this straight road and fall away before they reach the mark of the prize. Conversion is simply an enlisting in the army of Jesus. The battles and the hard bivouacs are yet before you. Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off. We want to impress it upon the mind of every young convert that the real conflict has only begun, and they have done no more than to put on their armour and enroll their names. Supposing you to be truly regenerated by the Divine Spirit, what next?

We would reply that the sowing-time of your spiritual spring has just begun. Do not repeat the current prattle about being a "harvested soul, gathered into the garner." The Church is not a granary. You are just beginning to sow for yourself, and whatsoever you sow you will surely reap. You are forming new habits of thinking and acting. You are an utterly inexperienced beginner in an entirely new line of life. The first year of your Christian life will have a mighty influence on all your future. Many a wedlock has been spoiled by a bad honeymoon. Many a promising convert has been ruined by an unhappy start ; or, at least, his

hopes of spiritual power and usefulness have been blasted.

Begin with a determination to learn Christ's will and to do it. This is what that famous convert near Damascus was aiming at when he inquired, so anxiously, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" It is very well to know what a Bunyan or a Finney or a Moody has written or said about the Christian life. But go to the Fountain-Head. Go to Jesus in a humble, docile spirit, and ask Him in fervent prayer to guide you. Bend your will to His will. He is perfectly willing to guide the meek and the teachable in the right way. I honestly believe that, when a docile heart sincerely asks to be led and then obeys the voice of conscience, that heart seldom takes a false step—yea, never does. Jesus promises to lead you in the way of all truth. Trust Him.

Conscience is the vital point. You need not trouble yourself much about your feelings or your frames, as long as conscience turns as steadily toward Christ as the needle toward the North Pole. It is the office of conscience to detect sin and righteousness; to decide for one and to reject the other. Feelings are very fallacious. Some Christians are very devout in their feelings and

wretchedly deficient in their daily conduct. They forget that the best proof of love to Christ is to "keep his commandments." Fervent Christians in the prayer-meeting, they are sorry specimens of Christians outside of it. There is a lamentable lack of conscience in too much of the flaming piety which burns out all its oil in the prayer-room or the "praise-meeting." We do not wonder at the sneers which are often levelled by shrewd men of the world at this sort of "revival religion." See to it that you give no occasion for such sneers. See to it that Jesus is not betrayed before His enemies by your inconsistency. The best thing you can do for your Saviour and your Master is to live an honest, truthful, pure, and godly life. Others are watching you. Then watch over yourself.

In putting on your armour, do not forget that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. Not content with merely reading your Bible, study it. Instead of skimming over whole acres of truth, put your spade into the most practical passages and dig deep. Study the twenty-fifth Psalm, and the twelfth chapter of Romans, as well as the sublime eighth chapter. Study the whole epistle of James. It will teach you how a Christian ought to behave before the world. As you get on further



After Conversion—What Next?

you may strike your hoe and your mattock down into the rich ore-beds of the Book of John. Saturate your heart with God's Word.

As for your field of Christian work, you ought not to have much trouble about that. Follow God's leadings, and go into the first field of labour which He opens to you. Do not seek easy posts, or those that will flatter vanity. Brave Mary Lyon used to tell her pupils at Mount Holyoke to "go where no one else was willing to go." Threescore of her graduates became missionaries for Christ Jesus. As soon as you begin to think that you are too good for your place, then the place is too good for you. Do what you can do best. A converted inebriate in my congregation has found his field in a praying band for the reformation of drunkards. While you are working for the Master, do not neglect the inner life of your own soul. If you do not keep the fountain well filled with love of Jesus, the stream of your activities will run dry as soon as the novelty is over.

Your daily battle will be with the sins that most easily beset you. The serpent often scotched is not killed. Paul himself had to give his carnal appetites the "black eye" pretty often. You will never get your discharge from this war with the old

Adam until you enter heaven. The moment you fall asleep the Philistines will be upon you. Challenge every tempter that approaches you. The dangerous devil is the one that wears the white robe and cozens you with a smooth tongue.

Finally, strive to be a Christian man everywhere. Carry the savour of your communion with Christ wherever you go. Jacob brought into his old blind father's presence such an odour of the barley-ground and the vineyard that he had "the smell of a field which the Lord had blessed." Every place you enter ought to be the better for your presence. Never disappoint the expectation of your Master. He is the best Master in the universe. Having put on the uniform of His glorious service, wear it until you are laid in your coffin. Carry His banner up to the heavenly gate. When Death calls your name on the roll, be ready to answer, "Here."

TEACHING BEGINNERS HOW TO WALK.

THE minor prophets are the least studied, probably, of any portion of God's Word—except the Book of Leviticus. Yet they are gold mines yielding inexhaustible ores of precious truth. There is a nugget of rare value to be found in the third verse of the eleventh chapter of Hosea. It refers to "Ephraim," who represents the ten tribes of Israel. The verse is this—"I taught Ephraim also to walk, taking them by their arms."

The idea is derived from the nursery, and it describes the manner in which a mother teaches her little ones to use their feet. When the youngster essays his first attempts to cruise around the room, he gets many a tumble, and falls foul of many an obstruction lying on the floor. So the nurse or the mother takes the wee toddler's hand, or puts her strong arms beneath the child's arms. Thus the parental strength holds up the weakling

while it is gaining the benefit of practice and coming at the right idea of the law of gravitation.

What a sweet picture of God's condescending love towards His infant children! He not only has an oversight of every young convert, but He extends constant help. It is in the way of self-exercise. What are feet given for but to walk with? And what are faculties and regenerating grace given to converts for except to be used in Christ's service? If not used pretty *soon*, the new-born soul will remain a pitiable dwarf or helpless cripple for life. I have watched a young beginner when making his first experiment in a social meeting. His knees shook a little when he rose up to speak, and he stumbled somewhat in his language. But everybody in the room sympathized with him, and the Divine love seemed to be holding his hand. He had broken the ice; and as a "first time" never comes but once, he feels that the worst of it is over. Some great orators have made a sad botch of their first public efforts; Disraeli did in Parliament, and Dr. Tyng in the pulpit. I can recall some excellent and edifying speakers in prayer-meetings whose tongue stammered and their heads swam when they first stood up for Jesus.

To give a public testimony for Christ is but a



single step in the pathway of duty. The young beginner is entirely on a new track—is serving a new Master, is encountering new difficulties, and is put into many new positions. Before he “runs in the way of God’s commandments” he has to creep. When he tries to use his own feet, he finds them very weak. If God should let go of him, he would drop. So he prays, “Hold me by my right hand,” and ventures forward. This is the experience of every sincere convert who actually desires to do the will of his heavenly Father. God never deserts such a child of grace. The meek will He guide in His way, and the limbs of faith grow strong by exercise.

God not only teaches a docile convert *how* to walk, but also *where* to walk. He puts up the bars of prohibition before certain dangerous places, and warns us off the ground. If we go there, we go at our peril. Occasionally we, heads of families, hear a loud thump in the hall, followed by a scream of distress, and we say, “Ah ! poor Benny or Jenny has tumbled down the stairs.” Our heavenly Father hears a great many such falls and cries of pain in His earthly household. That presumptuous professor who stepped off the platform of abstinence and caught a tumble down the stairway of

drunkenness, gets up a sadder and a wiser man. Then is the time, after a first fall, to put himself under God's protection. When a man *gets used to falling* he is ruined. A first fall may bruise ; but, after that, every repetition hardens.

The stairways of temptation are very numerous. Fashion carpets some of them gorgeously, and claims that they are safe. But we pastors know how often young converts venture on the slippery places only to catch wounding falls. The moment that a Christian goes where he cannot take Christ with him, he is in danger. The Master will not keep His hand under our arms when we go on forbidden ground. Presumptuous Peter needed a sharp lesson, and he got it. That bitter cry at the foot of the stairs bespoke an awful fall. How many such are rising daily into Christ's listening ears !

But there is no need that any Christian, young or old, should stumble. The "everlasting arms" are almighty arms. We have only to lean on them, and we shall never take a false step. Right before us are the footprints of Jesus, to tell us where to tread. Christ is not only our righteousness, but our example. If I can but set my frail human

foot into the spot where my Master trod, I *know* that His hand will hold me. There is no more necessity that a Christian should backslide than that the Polar Star should get lost in the skies. Only let us keep singing, "*He leadeth me*," and we shall find by-and-by that He has led us to glory.

WHAT ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN FOR?

EVERY good thing in this world has a right to exist. It is its own vindication. "The world owes me a living, at any rate," said a worthless idler once to Dr. Johnson. The shrewd old philosopher replied, "I am not so sure that it does." This world does not owe house-room to anybody or anything, social, civil, or moral, which is of no possible value. At the very outset the religion of Jesus Christ was challenged by such sharp questions as: "What does this new gospel mean? What reason has it for being? What are its fruits?" Jesus forewarned His followers that they must stand this searching test of practical results. "By their *fruits* ye shall know them. A tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." One of His apostles reiterated the same idea when he reminded his fellow-Christians that they must "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for



the hope that is in you." The evident meaning of this passage is, that every Christian must have good and sufficient reasons for being a Christian. These reasons he must be willing to give to every one who either challenges his creed or who honestly seeks for enlightenment. The strongest of all vindications would be the practical fruits which Christianity should produce.

"What are you a Christian *for?*" is a question which the unconverted often address to those who profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus. They have a right to ask it. Every auditor in my congregation has a right to put this question to me, as I stand in the pulpit. If I urge a man of the world to yield himself to the claims and control of the Lord Jesus, he is entitled to know what Christ can do for him, and also what he is expected to do for Christ. In reply to his proper interrogatory, I would answer that I am a Christian for three reasons. First, for my own good. In the daily conflict with sin I am sure to be overcome if I do not have Divine help; and this Christ gives us. My evil appetites and ambitious and unhallowed desires are certain to rule me and to ruin me if Divine grace does not hold them in check. I am "under condemnation" for past iniquities, and

Christ's atonement alone can deliver me from the just punishment due to me. In Christ I find pardon, peace, strength, and a hope of everlasting life. If there were not another person on the globe but myself, I ought to be a Christian for my own sake. Life is only pure when it is under God's control ; life is only happy when we can enjoy communion with God. Death is only safe when it is a departure "to be with Christ, which is far better."

A second answer to the question is : I am a Christian for the good of others. None of us can live entirely to ourselves and for ourselves, if we try. We touch others at too many points. If I reject the gospel, I not only rob myself of its benefits, but my example is against my neighbour's acceptance of the gospel. Every impenitent sinner has a twofold guilt. He not only rejects Christ, but helps to influence others to reject Him also. Taking a stand for Christ may lead others to come out on the Lord's side.

Christ Jesus taught no more beautiful and beneficent principle than that "we are not our own. No man liveth to himself or dieth to himself. We are debtors. Every man is to look not on his own things, but also on the things of others. We are to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of

love." Our Master set us an example of ineffable beauty in this regard. He "pleased not himself." He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister to others. As the sun expends itself in giving light and warmth, so Jesus made His earthly existence one constant expenditure of blessings. That journey to the coasts of Canaan was probably just for the relief of one afflicted woman and her daughter. Never does my Saviour appear more lovable to me than when He girds the towel about His loins, and stoops to wash His disciples' feet. "So ought ye," He sweetly says, "to wash one another's feet." This is the meaning of the phrase, "Ye are the salt of the earth;" for the prime use of salt is not to keep itself, but to preserve other objects from putrefaction.

Is it not about time for every Christian professor to feel that, if he is not a standing rebuke to rascality and falsehood, and if he has no antiseptic qualities, then he is a fraud himself? Is it not time, too, that the idea of absorbing gospel every Sabbath and giving out none during the week should be regarded as a disgrace to his Christian profession? This question cannot be pushed home too close to every member of Christ's Church: "What are you here *for*? Who is the better for your

influence, your gifts, your acts, and your example?" Our self-denying Redeemer gave the chief reason for His coming to earth to make men and women Christians when He said: "I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit." That fruit is godly and beneficent living. No other religion in the universe ever had so sublime a purpose. If all who profess and call themselves Christians would simply *live out* their holy professions, the conversion of the world would soon be achieved. If even a single state or a single county were thoroughly Christianized in every house, every school, every place of business, and if Jesus shone out in the domestic, social, and civil life of that whole community, then the whole world would be attracted to look at so beautiful a spectacle. Then the whole world would see what men and women could be made Christians *for*. Infidelity would hang its foolish head before such a triumphant argument for the religion of Calvary and the gospel. But until Christ's representatives live out more thoroughly the teachings and spirit of their Lord there will be an abundance of that secret scepticism which steals the human heart against God's glorious gospel. It is for this very

reason that so much of the headway gained by Sabbath eloquence is lost during the other six days of counteracting influence. One day of good preaching is no match for six days of inconsistent practice. God will never honour His Church with complete success until it completely honours Him.

This brings me to the third answer to our question. The highest reason for being a Christian is for God's glory. "Herein is my Father glorified," was Christ's supreme argument for a Christian life. The Westminster Assembly only paraphrased this truth when they defined man's chief end "to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." The supreme teaching of the parable of the Prodigal Son is to set forth God's delight in saving lost sinners. "Even so is there joy in the presence of the angels of God over every sinner that repenteth." The rescuing shepherd is far happier even than the rescued sheep. It was for the *joy* set before Him that my Saviour endured the cross and despised the shame. My salvation will be a jewel in His diadem. My life, if I live according to His beautiful teachings, will be a trophy of His cross. If Isaac Newton was so completely happy at the completion of his great problem that he could not eat or sleep, what

must be the rapture of HIM who shall yet “see of the travail of his soul.” and be divinely satisfied? O brethren, we shall understand what we were redeemed and sanctified *for*, when we behold the glorified Lamb of God enthroned amid the praises of His ransomed hosts.

WHOLLY FOR CHRIST.

WE never like to find fault with our “authorized version” of the Scriptures, unless we are compelled to do so. But the common rendering of the twelfth verse of the third chapter of Philippians gives a very weak idea of a very strong passage. Paul really means to say, “I press on” (for the prize), “if I may *seize* that for which I was *seized on* by Christ Jesus.” Dean Alford’s rendering is: “If I may lay hold on that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.” Paul realised that the crucified Saviour had grasped him on the road to Damascus and appropriated him to His glorious service. When we contemplate the prodigious vigour and the splendid dialectic skill of the man, we do not wonder that Christ coveted him for the apostolate, and “seized on” him by His converting grace.

Bearing this in mind, we understand better why Paul’s motto should have been “this *one thing* I

do." He lived for one great purpose, and to that he bent all his powers and consecrated all his faculties. In the best sense of the term, Paul was a man of one idea. The "hold" of his intellect (if we may use a nautical simile) was abundantly stowed with resources of learning, argument, and rich mental gifts; but a single holy purpose trod the quarter-deck and floated its ensign from the peak. "Go a little deeper," said a wounded French soldier at Austerlitz, to the surgeon who was probing his left side for the bullet—"go a little deeper, and you will find the emperor." So the great apostle might say, Go deeper, go to the inmost core of my heart, and you will find the crucified Jesus. Other feelings I am possessed of, but this one possesses me. Other affections lie near the surface, but this master passion lurks and lives in the inmost centre of my soul. For me to live is Christ. This *one thing* I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

All the men and women who have made their mark in this world and have achieved the best results have kept the eye clear and single toward

one noble purpose. The master passion with Newton, the prince of Christian philosophers, was science. He attributed his splendid successes in discovery to the simple principle of “always *intending* my mind” upon the one thing in hand. Luther jarred all Europe by continually hurling the great revealed truth of “justification by faith” against its old ramparts of superstition. Such men swing their whole being into one direction. The effective Christian is the man who unites all his powers into a single pile or package, and then binds them round with this strong cord—“The love of Christ constraineth me.” So Paul bound up his, and hurled the mass with such momentum that it burst through, and has come bounding on even into these modern centuries.

A man of moderate talents may achieve blessed results for Christ by concentration. George Müller is a striking illustration. He lives and acts every day as if the loving Jesus had seized on him for a single purpose—viz., to house and feed and instruct thousands of little orphans. Instead of letting his life waste itself into numberless little twigs, he, like a wise gardener, has pruned them off, and allowed the whole sap of his spiritual being to flow into one or two bountiful boughs, laden with

precious fruit. I can name, within the circle of my acquaintance, several men and women of wonderful effectiveness for good who are not gifted with remarkable talents. Their single talent is to love Jesus and to serve Him thoroughly. More than half the battle with Moody is that he aims all his powers, every moment, at one target. Alas ! how many lives of professed Christians are utterly wasted by being frittered away into scores of channels, instead of being condensed into the single purpose of doing Christ's will, and thereby being of some service in the world. With all such the pulse of love to Jesus beats low and feebly. They need a reconversion, a thorough pruning away of the limbs which steal the heart's-blood from their Master. The first step must be the penitential prayer : "Lord, I am a cumberer of the ground. What wilt thou have me to do ?" And when they have taken the new departure, let them put their whole soul into it. This process, well begun and well carried out in all our Churches, would soon quadruple the power of our Christianity. It would be hard to discover what is the "one thing" for which thousands of church-members are living, unless it be for money-making or some respectable form of self-indulgence.

To "get on" in the world is the uppermost thought; and if by "getting on" no more is meant than industrious thrift and honest provision for life's necessities, then is it not only innocent, but commendable. God's Word honours industry and frugality. Would that both of them were more practised as Christian virtues. But while a Christian is striving to get *on*, ought he not to be still more earnest in his endeavour to get *up*? Ought he not to make life's chief aim to "press toward the prize of a high calling"? to attain to a higher spiritual stature? to ascend toward the fuller, stronger, clearer likeness to his Master? My brother, are you getting *up* every day?

President Van Buren is reported to have remarked, when he heard that his son, a lawyer, had married a lady of large wealth: "Well, he is ruined! She is very rich. Now he will give up his profession, for which he has great ability, and become merely a rich man—the least useful of human things." This is too true. Merely to absorb and enjoy a large amount of God's silver and gold, without holding any of it in trust for God's service and the good of humanity, is one of the lowest forms of human existence. For a Christian, redeemed by Calvary's blood, to have

no higher aim, is treason to Christ and spiritual suicide. I know of wealthy followers of Jesus Christ who consecrate their purses to bountiful charities, and their drawing-rooms to the uses of a Christian sociality and the promotion of Bible philanthropies, and their personal influence to winning sinners to the Saviour. While getting on, they get up, and lift others with them.

This is too wide a topic for a single chapter. But the gist of it lies in this truth: Christ must have the whole heart and give the casting-vote in every decision, or else we cannot be full-grown Christians. This is the "one thing." Write six ciphers in a line, and they amount to nothing. Put the figure 1 before them, and they amount to a million. All human talents and possessions are but ciphers until you put the name of JESUS at the head of them. Then they make their owner a millionaire for heaven.

*THE CHRISTIAN THE WORLD'S
BIBLE.*

YE are the light of the world ; a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. This is a timely word from the Master to the thousands who are just now making a public profession of Him before the world. For every one who enters Christ's Church enters not only into peculiar relations towards Him, but towards the unconverted. They will watch closely for "fruits," and they have a right to expect that every Christian should live worthy of the name. The most powerful argument to move and to win a soul to Jesus is the daily observation of true, brave, cheerful, holy, Christian lives. Every young convert must not only be looking to Jesus, but remember also that the world is looking at him.

Twice over Paul repeats the urgent admonition to Christ's followers to walk consistently before "them that are *without*." In one verse he says,

“Walk in wisdom,” which does not mean a plausible prudence, but the wisdom of obeying God. In the other verse he says, “Walk honestly towards them that are without.” A Christian is the world’s Bible. He is the only Bible that the majority of unconverted people look at. They scan the pages closely and often chuckle when they discover blots and disgraceful records there. It is a terrible injury to a man of the world to have his mind prejudiced and embittered towards the religion of Christ by the inconsistent conduct of professed Christians. Therefore for the sake of the outside world, as well as for the honour of Jesus, all church-members are exhorted to “walk honestly towards them that are without.”

Dean Alford translates the Greek word “becomingly.” Dr. Samuel Davidson, in his excellent version, renders it “seemly.” Other good meanings of the word are nobly, decorously, honourably. They each describe the conduct which Christians should exhibit towards “outsiders.”

Is it becoming for a follower of Jesus Christ to cheapen or degrade before the world either the Holy Word, or the day, or the ordinances of God? Flippant burlesques of the Bible come under this category. All disparaging criticism of sound faith-

ful preaching of the gospel, uttered before the unconverted, is destructive of the influence of the discourse upon such souls. Church-members often unwittingly kill their own pastor's sermons ! Every thoughtless criticism or silly cavil that hinders the effect of the gospel upon a sinner is itself a sin.

Is it becoming for God's people to degrade the services of God's house to the level of the lyceum or the concert-room? Is it seemly for a follower of Jesus to belittle, either by unthinking scoffs or carping ridicule, the services of worship, and the proclamations of heavenly truth on which eternal destinies are hanging? We seldom hear a Roman Catholic speak triflingly of his religion or its ordinances. We wish we could say as much for all Protestants.

An honest walk refers not only to business integrity, but to every relation of the Christian to the outside world. Fraud is always abominable ; but for a church-member to overreach or swindle an "outsider" is a double sin. It is a sin against Jesus, and also against a neighbour's soul. It may harden him against the Word of life. Christians must not complain if they are watched. They were *intended to be watched.* "Ye are my witnesses." "Ye are a city set upon an hill." The Christian

who so lives as to win a soul to the Saviour shall have a star in his crown ; he who so lives as to repel a soul from the cross, will have the blood of that ruined one upon his skirts.

The demand of the day is for a higher standard and style of Christian life. Every follower of Christ must represent his religion purely, loftily, impressively, before that multitude of "Bible-readers" whose only Bible is the Christian. Whoever else betrays a trust, the Christian never should. Whoever else may play the sneak, or the poltroon, or the dissembler, the Christian never should. Let the follower of Satan choose a tortuous path if he will, the Christian must walk by the hair-line.

It is always a terrible condemnation of a church-member that no one should suspect him of being one. We have heard of a young lady who engaged for many months in a round of frivolities—utterly forgetful of her covenant with Christ. One Sabbath morning, on being asked by a gay companion to accompany him to a certain place, she declined, on the ground that it was the Communion Sabbath in her own church. "Are *you* a communicant?" was the cutting reply. The arrow went to her heart. She felt that she had denied the Lord who died for

her. That keen rebuke brought her to repentance and a reconversion.

Our prayer for every new beginner in the Christian life, is that no one may ever have occasion to raise the question, *Are you* a follower of Jesus Christ?

“MASTER!”

THREE is prodigious power in a single word, when that word is large in its meanings and fragrant with rich associations. The name “Jesus” suggests salvation from the curse of sin. The name “Christ” describes Him who was anointed to be His people’s King and Teacher. The word “Emmanuel” signifies that God is with us in the person of His Son. There is another name which we do not so often employ, but which is a concentrated bundle of rays illuminating the relation of Christ Jesus to His own. It is that word which Mary of Magdala uttered in that moment of rapturous discovery at the sepulchre. Her happy, loving heart simply exclaimed, “My Master!” and she threw herself at His feet in joyful reverence. He gently checks her gesture of devout affection, by saying to her, “Cling not to me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father.”

The word “Master” is a profound one, as an

expression of love and loyalty, a deep well from which we may draw up plentiful suggestions both of duty and delight. Jesus Himself acknowledged the relation when He said : “ Ye call me Master ; and ye say well, for so I am. One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” He has a right to this title. Jesus owns every Christian in the universe. They were His from before the foundation of the world. “They are mine, and thou gavest them unto me,” was the claim He made on the eve of His redeeming sacrifice upon the cross. We are not our own. Jesus purchased us with atoning blood. And the very essence of conversion consists in a change of masters. Instead of that cruel slave-driver, the devil—whose only wages are death—the penitent convert takes on the easy yoke of obedience to a new Master. The thoroughness of conversion depends mainly upon the degree to which the old bondage to sin is thrown off and plucked out, and the new allegiance to Christ is made genuine and complete. Thousands commit the wretched folly of trying to serve two opposing masters. During the week Mammon gets the lion’s share of time, thought, and purse. Christ is put off with a stingy hour or two on the Sunday and a few spasmodic devotions. If their

trunk is on the Church side of the dividing wall, their branches hang over on the world's side, and there the fruit falls. Brother Demas and Brother Plutus pay their Church contributions grudgingly, as to an assessor of taxes ; but what they give for their carriages, their opera tickets, their equipage and wardrobes, is given "with a will." Into the very core of thousands of hearts bores this insatiate worm of selfishness, eating out the heart and leaving to Christ only the shell of an outward profession. How will such professors dare to call Jesus their Master at the day of judgment?

To a genuine Christian, Jesus is the best and kindest of masters. Life is a school ; and, as I sit on my bench learning the lessons which He appoints for me, my loving "Magister" comes to me and kindly explains many a "hard saying" and helps me with spiritual light. My soul burns within me when He talks with me and opens up the wondrous discoveries of His love. Sometimes he employs the rod of discipline, but never unless I deserve it. To my aching heart He says : "Whom I love I chasten, and I correct every child whom I receive unto myself. The disciple is *not above* his Master." There is a wonderfully close connection

between these two words, *disciple* and *discipline*. If I am the one, I must expect the other. What am I placed in Christ's school for, except to be instructed, and chastised, and purified, and strengthened, and prepared to graduate at last into the higher class of heaven? Jesus governs His school by a law of love. Yet it is law. “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” He has a right to mark out our studies, prescribe our tasks, set our copies, chastise our waywardness, and enforce His rules. The highest attainment any pupil of Christ can reach is perfect obedience.

Let me emphasise this word *obedience*. It is the foremost word for every home. The besetting sin of many households is lax authority and filial disobedience. Reverence for parents is giving place to pert self-assertion and premature “having my own way.” If a parent is not the master of his home, he is doomed to be the sorrowful slave of a set of selfish young tyrants and tormentors. When a merchant wanted a boy in his establishment, a crowd of applicants appeared. He inserted this advertisement, to sift them :—

Wanted.—A boy who always obeys his mother.

The next day only two lads applied for the place.

We might enlarge the wise merchant's advertisement, and announce as follows :—

Wanted.—The sons and daughters who always obey their parents ; the workmen who obey their employer's orders ; the magistrates who always obey the laws ; and members of all our Churches who gladly do their Master's will.

Obedience is the crowning grace of a follower of Christ. Nay, it is the very essence of holiness. To learn Christ's will is the chief purpose of Bible study and of prayer. To do Christ's will is the loftiest attainment to which any child of grace can aspire this side of heaven. The essential qualities of holy obedience are : a willingness to let our loving Master rule us ; a compliance with His orders, without murmuring ; a readiness to be nothing, in order that He may be all in all ; and as faithful a service of an unseen Lord as if He were actually and visibly by our side. To deny sinful self is hard ; but to deny "righteous self" and to claim no merit for the best thing we can do is a glorious victory.

I have no especial liking for monkery, but some devout thoughts and happy suggestions have issued from the cells of monasteries. There is a legend that a certain wilful monk of the Franciscan

order stubbornly refused to obey the commands of his superior. A severe punishment was prepared for him. His associates dug a deep upright grave, and placed him in it. After a few shovelfuls of earth had been thrown in, the superior, St. Francis, said to the monk : “Is your self-will dead yet ? Do you yield ?” The iron will made no response. The burying process went on, until the earth reached the loins, and then the shoulders, and then to the lips. A few moments more and those lips would have been silenced ; but the iron will broke, and the submissive friar meekly answered, “*I am dead.*” Oh ! how often our all-wise Master puts us into a deep pit of trial, to subdue our pride, or to tame our passions, or to break our stubborn self-will. Blessed is he who can look up into the countenance of Jesus, and honestly say, “Master, my rebellious self is dead, that Thou mayest live in me, and that I may live for Thee, and Thee alone !”

Bonar, the sweetest of living hymn-writers, has wrought well this idea of complete submissiveness to Jesus in these loyal lines :—

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be ;
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be, or rough,
It will be still the best ;
Winding or straight, it matters not—
It leads me to Thy rest.

I dare not choose my lot ;
I would not, if I might.
Choose Thou for me, my Lord,
So shall I walk aright.

CAUTION TO CHRISTIANS.

EVERY one—whether within or without the visible Church—is in danger of falling through temptation. No church wall can be built so high as to exclude the tempter. And there is no one who has not weak points—some one or more combustible spots, on which the stray sparks of temptation may alight and kindle into a blaze. However far any Christian has travelled on his spiritual way, he has not got beyond the reach of danger. However firm he may stand, he will stand all the firmer if he feels constantly the need of caution, the need of prayer, and the need of clinging close to Christ.

Young converts, in the ardours of their “first love,” are in danger; so are all who are enjoying peculiar spiritual prosperity. It is the sunshiny day that brings out the adders. Every state of mind that tends to breed vain confidence and good opinion of ourselves is a state of peril. Peter boasted that he stood impregnable when he uttered

the vaunt, "Though all men forsake thee, yet *will not I.*" Hark ! listen for a moment after that presumptuous boast, and you will hear a *fall!* " Then Peter began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man." Poor Peter ! bruised, bleeding, crestfallen ! As he goes away weeping into the garden, methinks some one might whisper into his ear, " Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Worldly prosperity is always a state of danger. A man is led to feel rich, when in heart graces he may be really becoming poorer every hour. He wins friends, and feels strong. He has a high standing in society for wealth, popularity, or culture, and yet all the time he may be waning in his spiritual life. He is growing less humble, less dependent on God. He is being gradually undermined, and leans slowly over more and more from the perpendicular, like a dwelling whose corner stone has been washed away. Let him who thinketh he standeth on such a quicksand take heed lest he fall.

A presumptuous spirit is always perilous. " Who is afraid ? " is the vaunt of the presumptuous professor. " Who fears ? " says every self-confident Peter in the Church. " Others may fall, but I am

in no danger." Yet Peter was the very first disciple to desert his Master. I always feel apprehensions for those who, on entering the Church, make a very fluent, showy profession, in which the little word "I" is painfully prominent. They are often the first to backslide. I had rather hear more self-distrust and less of complacency. Poor "Mr. Fearing," in Bunyan's allegory, managed to reach heaven at the last, though with a very poor opinion of himself; while self-conceited "Mr. Presumption" was left on the road fast asleep, with the fetters of sin upon his heels. When a church member says, "Who fears?" I am ready to answer, "*I am afraid for you, as your pastor.*" I always expect to see men stumble when they hold their heads too high. I am always anxious for those who have an unbounded self-confidence—who are glib in self-commendation, or else most suspiciously severe in denouncing themselves as the very "chief of sinners." Self-conceit has always been the intoxication that preceded a fall, ever since the days when a backsliding Church boasted, "Now we are rich, now we are increased in goods, now we have need of nothing." My brother, when you begin to expose yourself to irreligious influences, and feel no fear, then may your Chris-

tian friends begin to tremble for you. When the pilot, in steering his ship along the coast of Sicily, finds that she will not obey the helm, he knows that he is within the suck of the whirlpool of Charybdis. It is an under-current of tremendous power on a ship's keel. David was in such a spiritual under-current when he swept into the maelstrom of adultery with Bathsheba. Conscience did not hold the ship.

What is the safeguard at such times? you ask. We answer, Keep out of the currents. Avoid the region of danger. Go not nigh it. Where the ice is thin, keep off it, and you will never be drowned. Whenever you feel a sinful inclination drawing you toward any object, or pleasure, or pursuit, then brace your foot down and say to yourself, "No, I'll not go one inch!" A church-member, or any man, who finds a glass of wine tasting good has no business to touch another drop. He is in danger. He does not see it yet; but there is an adder coiled in the bottom of that glass for him. No Christian, no minister of God, no saint, however saintly, has any right to tamper with that cup which has sent millions to damnation. If God says to me, "Look not on the wine when it giveth its colour in the cup," what right have I to sip where the serpent

lies hidden in the ruby depths? If one visit to a theatre or a ball-room makes a Christian want to go again, then let him stay away. He is getting into the under-current. He will be wrecked on the rocks before he is aware. The safest rule for the child of God is to practise a total abstinence from the glass, from the theatre, from the card-table, from the dancing -hall, from everything that leads the footsteps into slippery places. A Christian should never go where he is not willing to pray to his Saviour to keep him. How would it sound for a young church-member to say, "O Lord, I am going to take a social glass with some of my companions to-night; I pray Thee to keep me from loving the drink, or from setting a bad example"? We close these few familiar cautions with reiterating this one safe rule—*Never do what you cannot ask Christ to bless; and never go into any place or any pursuit in which you cannot ask Christ Jesus to go with you.*

***THE STONE THAT STOPS THE
BLESSING.***

JUST over on the eastern slope of Olivet a crowd of villagers are gathered at the mouth of a tomb. It is a cave cut horizontally into the rock, and a slab or boulder bars up the entrance. Within that sepulchre the corpse of a young man has been lying for four days. Without it stands the weeping Jesus, surrounded by two weeping women and a company of mourners. A single motion of that omnipotent hand, or a single utterance of that wonder-working voice, could burst that rocky sepulchre in a moment; but it was never the habit of our Lord to perform one superfluous act. What man could do for himself Jesus never did for him. So He says to the people beside Him: "Take ye away that stone!" Upon the one side of that stone was *death*. Upon the other side stood One who called Himself "the Resurrection and the *Life*." The obstruction of that stone laid between the dead Lazarus and the life-giving Jesus, and

while it remained there the miracle was stayed. The stone must first be removed before the putrefying form of the dead could issue forth into life.

This wonderful scene at Bethany gives a vivid illustration of a truth to which Christ's followers, as well as the unconverted, should give instant heed. And that truth is that God's work can be hindered, and is hindered, by human hearts and hands. Jesus was just as omnipotent at Nazareth as He was anywhere else. But He "*did not* many mighty works there because of their unbelief." That was the stone that stopped the blessing. In our land and in our day there are many stones which seem to obstruct the all-loving Son of God in His mightiest work—that of raising to life the souls of them that are dead in trespasses and sins.

One of these obstructing stones is found in the unworthy and unchristlike lives of so many who profess and call themselves Christians. In view of the immense number of orthodox discourses that are preached, and the immense number of fervent prayers that are offered, and the vast outlay of time, money, and effort, a very small proportion of the immortal souls in this nation are converted. Statistics show that the leading Evangelical deno-

minations do very little more than hold their own. For example, the Presbyterian body reports an increase of 22,000 members during the last year; but we all know how incomplete is the report of losses by spiritual desertion. The actual fact is that the advance of the Christian Churches upon a world "lying in sin" is painfully slow. One sufficient reason for this small progress is found in the positively unchristian influence of multitudes who represent Christianity to the world. Every church-member who makes his religious profession a cloak for deceit and dishonesty; every man who devoutly says, "Lord, Lord!" in a prayer-meeting, and yet "doeth not Christ's will" when out of the meeting, is a positive antagonist to the spread of Bible piety. All that numerous class who figure on church-rolls, and at the same time figure as sharp dealers, or unscrupulous dealers, or mercenary politicians, or self-indulgent panderers to the loose ways of the world—all this class are as positively an obstruction to Christ's reaching dead sinners as that stone was an obstruction to His reaching the dead Lazarus. The good sermons of the Sabbath are neutralised by the bad practice of Christ's representatives during the week. A faithful pastor sits down to labour with an unconverted parishioner,

but he finds the man's heart ironclad with prejudice that has been produced by the bad influence of one or more inconsistent Christians. A zealous Sunday-school teacher tries hard to win a bright lad in his or her class to Jesus ; but the boy sees every day such an unattractive specimen of "a Christian" under his own roof at home, that he is repelled from the very name of religion. Now, my brethren, these are but examples of a tremendous and wide-spread fact. And, in view of it, our Lord is sounding into the ears of His Church the solemn command : "Take ye away that stone."

Another stone of hindrance is found in the self-indulgent spirit of all that large class who never will exert themselves except under the bait or the bribe which may be held out to their selfishness. Just so far as their self-gratification is promoted they are willing to serve their crucified Master, but no one inch further. They will not even come regularly to God's house unless they are baited by attractive preaching, nor even then if the weather be uncomfortable. They will not engage in any work of reform and philanthropy unless their love of novelty be appealed to, or their self-esteem be courted by a post of honour in the movement. They only give to the Lord what is left over after

they have paid all the bills of pride, or fashion, or luxury. Even their devotions must bring enjoyment, or they will soon be done with them. I tell you, fellow-Christians, that this spirit of self-indulgence must be in God's sight a stench and an abomination. The very first test of obedience to Christ is cross-bearing self-denial. We must roll away this wretched stone from our church doors, or Christ will never come in and bring His indispensable blessing.

Other stones bar up the path of Jesus Christ when He seeks to reach the multitudes lying in spiritual death. There is the stone of censoriousness and the boulder of bigotry. They must be removed before God's people can work with one accord for the salvation of sinners. And what a huge hard rock at the very mouth of the cave is *unbelief!* Jesus could not reach the dead in Nazareth on account of this stubborn obstruction. He will not do any mighty works in our congregations this winter if that stone lies athwart His path. "Take ye away these stones!" But how? The answer is to be found in deep, honest, self-abasing repentance of our hateful sins. This, too, is not to be accomplished by setting apart formally a single day of "humiliation and prayer," as if we

could do up the whole work of repentance in the gross. It will require more than a few hours of fasting and prayer to cast out such demons as selfishness, worldliness, and unbelief. Repentance, to be of any avail, must work a change of heart and of conduct. "O Lord, revive thy work!" is a prayer that is almost stereotyped in all our social and devotional meetings. But the first step toward a genuine revival must be a sincere and heart-humbling repentance—a repentance which cuts to the uttermost roots. The compassionate Jesus stands waiting with the boon of eternal life. If He wept for His dead friend in the sepulchre of Bethany, we may almost imagine Him as standing with tears in His loving eyes before the moral sepulchre in which impenitent souls lie buried. Corruption has seized upon them and is doing its work. Shall these dead souls be quickened to life? They cannot be, or surely they will not be until the stones that barricade their prison-house be rolled away. I do not speak now of the obstacles which lie in the doorways of sinners' hearts. Of them I may write in another article. My chief concern is now with Christ's Church; and never will the voice of Him who is "the LIFE" reach the dead in sin until God's people go down

upon their knees, and with penitential prayer and self-denying effort *roll away the obstructing stone.*

Bethany witnessed a wondrous spectacle of joy after that rock was removed and the flash of life shot into that charnel-house of putrefaction. It was the most memorable day in the annals of the village. No days in the history of a Church are so luminous with holy joy as those in which the dead are brought to life and the lost are found.

Sometimes the condition of a Church and community is like that of famine-stricken Leyden, when it was besieged by Philip's popish army. Within the beleaguered town death reigned. Its brave defenders were starving by thousands. Succour was waiting for them in the Dutch fleet, which could not reach the city. But the heroic Hollanders sluiced the dykes and let in the sea ; and as the rescuing fleet swept in, they flung the loaves of bread to the overjoyed crowds which thronged the canals of Leyden. Then, pouring into the great Protestant cathedral, they made its arches ring with thanksgiving unto God, their Deliverer.

Brethren, let us sluice the dykes of pride and selfishness and unbelief. The waters of salvation

will flow in. Where death reigned life shall enter. The courts of God shall resound with the "new song" of the converted. And there shall be great joy among the angels of heaven over sinners that are saved.

WHAT EVERY BACKSLIDER NEEDS.

TWO of the most salient points in the Bible are man's weakness and God's strength. There are very few characters in the Bible-gallery, even the best, who did not, at some time or place, fall away into lamentable sin. Modern "Perfectionism" finds but small comfort or aid from Scripture biographies. It is a striking fact, too, that several of God's people broke at the very point in which they seemed to be the strongest. For example, Noah was a Puritan, and yet he fell (once at least) into drunkenness. Moses' name is a synonym of meekness, but he lost his temper and received God's rebuke. Solomon was once the wisest of men, but he played the fool with women and wine-cups and heathen idols. Peter was a brave man, but after he had boasted of his bravery, he played the coward under the sneers of a silly servant-girl. These and others who were guilty of backslidings — either brief or more protracted —

were restored by the grace of God. What they passed through is precisely what every backslider in our Churches needs, and that is a *reconversion*.

Peter's case certainly was of this description; for Jesus said unto him (while he was already a disciple): "When thou art *converted*, strengthen the brethren." Reconversion is not regeneration. God's Word gives no hint of a second or a third new birth of the soul. No such process is recognised in the history of spiritual experience. Reconversion is neither a second awakening of a sinner, nor a second regeneration of one who has been a true Christian.

It is simply the return to God, and to the path of duty, on the part of a backsliding believer. Peter did not cease to be a Christian during that sad and shameful denial of his Master. Nor does any truly regenerated man entirely lose his faith or his heart-union to Christ during his seasons of disgraceful declension. He is not in a healthy state or a happy state; nor is he "*dead in sin*." There is life there, but life at a low ebb; and nothing but the forbearing patience of God prevents him from utter apostacy and final perdition.

Peter's heart-process in reconversion was similar to that in his original conversion in two vital par-

ticulars. He sorrowed for sin and repented of it. He came to Jesus in genuine faith. Reconversion is a turning unto God. It differs from a first conversion in two respects; viz., the point set out from is a different point, and the distance travelled over is vastly less.

Thousands of church-members are in painful need of a reconversion. The Church gets very little from them except their names on its roll, and their appearance at its communion table. They not only do not help; their wretched influence makes them a hindrance. No "revival" is more needed in our Churches than the recovery of the backslider.

The first thing for every backslider to do is to come back to Christ. "He *restoreth* my soul." That is, He reinvigorates the life, gives new vitality to the heart's blood, new strength to the spiritual sinews, new elasticity to the footstep in the path of duty. "Oh, that I could be again what I once was!" is the sad outcry of many a backsliding professor when his conscience begins to tingle, and the Holy Spirit begins to strive with him. But that is not the point, brother! Instead of vainly trying to get back your former self, and to reach your old mark, strike out for something better! You cannot



run your experiences again in an old mould. Seek from the Master a new power, a new inspiration, strength for new service, and direction into new lines of activity. The less you think of your former self, and the less you attempt to stereotype an old experience, the better it will be for you. "Put off the old man, with his deeds, and put on the new man in Christ Jesus."

Having come first to Jesus in heart-contrition and self-abasement, it is a good thing to make an honest confession. A member of my own Church who had wandered off into scandalous practices, came into our prayer-meeting one evening, and standing up before the pulpit made a truly manly acknowledgment of his backslidings. He asked his brethren to forgive him, and prayed God to forgive him. From that time he never alluded to the painful subject again, but threw himself into zealous labours for the Master—in which he continued until his dying day. Instead of nauseating us by harping on his aberrations (after the manner of some reformed inebriates), he made a clean breast of it once for all, and then began to bring forth "fruits meet for repentance."

There could not be a more profitable or God-honouring service in our social meetings than for

backsliders to make frank confession, and implore their wounded Master to restore them to His favour. General confession of sin in public prayer amounts to less than nothing very often : it is only from the throat outward. But to stand up and acknowledge guilt, and breach of covenant, and wounding of Christ, in the house of His friends, demands an aroused conscience and genuine penitence. No backslider is in a fair way of recovery until he is humbled. He must "remember whence he has fallen, and repent and do the first works," or he can never have restored to him the joys of Christ's salvation. To die in a state of backsliding may involve the loss of heaven !

THE GREAT SEVENFOLD PRAYER.

THE sublimest argument of the Apostle Paul is that in defence of the doctrine of the Resurrection—in the fifteenth chapter of Corinthians. His sublimest expression of Christian experience is in the eighth chapter of Romans. But no prayer which his pen has ever recorded has seemed to my mind so wonderful in its spiritual richness and its comprehensiveness as that one which is contained in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians. It covers only three verses, being a model for brevity in prayer. It contains seven distinct subjects of petition, each one of them being of the very highest magnitude.

1. The first petition for his brethren at Colosse is that they may be “filled with the knowledge of God’s *will*.” This is a foundation point. No one can obey God’s will until he knows what it is. The secret purposes of our Heavenly Father cannot certainly be intended, for they “belong to God,”

and to Him only. The apostle evidently refers to what God is graciously ready to reveal—and that is the truths which we are to *believe*, and the things which we are to *do*. Paul prayed that God would make their rule of faith and practice very clear to them.

2. To discern the Divine will clearly, and to know just what steps we should take every hour of life, requires *spiritual insight*. This does not refer to intellectual acumen, but to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. No richer blessing is promised to sincere believers than that the Spirit of God will illuminate and guide them. A precious gift is this indeed, by which our vision is clarified, our knowledge of right and wrong wonderfully assisted, and our consciences enlightened from above. The Spirit scatters the mists of error and doubt, and fills our souls with delightful perceptions of God, of His will, of His grace, and of our own duties hour by hour. Faith has its telescopes by which it penetrates into the unseen worlds as distinctly as the tubes of the astronomers take observations of the transit of Mercury. The holier our lives the clearer will be our spiritual vision. Sin blurs and bedims the glass. If the heart be “single” to the glory of God, and longs to do His will, our whole being shall be “filled with light.”

3. Having discovered our pathway of duty, what next? Assuredly that we should walk straightforward in it. A "*worthy walk*" signifies a life in the footsteps of Jesus, a constant and conscientious endeavour to keep His commandments. Was there ever a time when this was more vitally important than in these days of sad stumblings and disgraceful falls? He only who walks uprightly walketh surely. To set our feet squarely on the line of Christ's commandments and to hold our course steadily on that straight and narrow track, without a tremor at the knees or a glance to the right hand or to the left, is a glorious achievement. One such life in a community is a perpetual answer to the scoffer, a perpetual argument for the Gospel, a perpetual benediction to society. Felix Neff and Oberlin enriched their Alpine home an hundred-fold more by their beautiful and godly lives than if they had produced a whole library of sacred literature. What we most need now are honest, holy lives—sermons in shoes—men and women who keep step with Jesus in a daily walk of conformity to God's will.

4. Such a Christian will be no barren cumberer of the ground. As the glory of a healthy apple-tree is its fruit, so the glory of a genuine Christian

is his usefulness. He does not merely blossom out with a goodly profession, he bears fruit with all his might and main. There is not a sapless twig or a barren bough on the whole tree which is planted by the rivers of grace and yieldeth its fruit every month. In our old home orchard there were many varieties of apples. So in God's orchards there are ancient olives like Augustine and Calvin—rich, juicy "sweetings" like Rutherford and Baxter—mellow pippins grown by Leighton, Hamilton, and Taylor—and bountiful bearers like Spurgeon and Newman Hall. Even some small trees bear large fruit. Whether it be on a foreign mission-field, or in an humble tract-district, or in a charity school, or in a sick room where love moves about with gentle tread—the fruits of the Spirit ripen under the smile of God. Herein is the Father glorified that we strive to bear fruit on every branch. We have in our mind's eye a broad-limbed brother who is as heavy-laden at threescore and ten as when he was first grafted with grace. He is a tree that will always drop you a sweet apple of kindness for the shaking.

5. The blessings and promises of God's Word often group themselves into *sevens*. So is it with this wonderful prayer of Paul. He prays for know-

ledge of God's will, for spiritual insight, for consistency of conduct, for fruitfulness in every good work. Then he begs that God would bestow three other precious gifts. Those are *strength*, and *patience*, (or "long-mindedness"), and *joyfulness*. I wish I had time and space to dwell on each of these imperial gifts. They make up a trinity of spiritual blessings which this poverty-stricken world can neither give nor take away. Every humble follower of Jesus can possess them all. What paltry estates are such as Vanderbilt's, or Girard's, or Stewart's — for which hungry heirs contend — in comparison with the magnificent possessions which this sevenfold prayer unfolds ! Turn, my dear reader, to the chapter which contains this wonderful prayer; study it devoutly, and *make it your own.*

CHRIST AS THE SOUL'S TRUSTEE.

WHEN Dr. James W. Alexander was about breathing his last, a friend by his bedside repeated the words, "I know in whom I have believed." The dying man, with that scholarly accuracy that always distinguished him, said: "No ; it is 'I know *whom* I have believed.'" The original Greek of this glorious passage is even stronger than our translation. A good rendering of it would be: "I know whom I have *trusted*, and am persuaded that he is able to keep the trust which I have committed to him unto that day."

In these days it is a painfully perplexing question: "Whom can I trust?" So many investments which were thought to be perfectly safe have turned out to be well-nigh worthless, so many "securities" have proved insecure, and so many men regarded as incorruptibly honest have snapped like pipe-clay under the strain, that confidence in almost everybody and everything is sorely shaken. For

the ultimate reliance in every bank, life insurance company, or other corporation is on personal integrity. The only assets that can make any of them reliable are capacity and conscience. Ability and honesty are the only two sureties that can make assurance sure in everything that appertains to pecuniary or political trusts.

While hearts are aching with disappointments over losses and shattered confidences, it gives me great joy to point to one Trustee who has never broken His word, never defaulted in His promises, never lost what was committed to His keeping. An old captive in Nero's prison felt a glow of ecstasy that warmed his aged fingers when he wrote to his son Timothy: "I know whom I have trusted." He knew still more. He knew that a day of martyrdom was just at hand, and beyond that a day of judgment. For both days, severe and searching as they would be, the old hero was ready.

He had put his soul in trust with his Saviour, and felt no more uneasiness than he did about the rising of the morrow's sun. The same assurance that Paul had, you and I may have. Let me give a few good reasons for making Jesus Christ the trustee of our souls.

I. Every one of us has an undying soul, of infinite value. That soul is by nature guilty, and the wages of actual sin is death. It is idle for the sinner to talk about being condemned in the world to come. God's Book declares that he is "condemned already." On the back of this declaration comes another one, that no sinner can save his own soul. "Neither is there salvation in any other" than in Christ Jesus. Now, then, since you and I are actually condemned for our actual sins, and since it is impossible to deliver ourselves from the guilt and doom of these sins, the most vital question to us in the universe is: "Who *can* save us?" To answer that question is the chief purpose of that book which is called Gospel or "good tidings." Since I cannot save myself, whom shall I trust to save me?

The Son of God answers this question of questions by saying: *Trust me!* Two things I need to know, and two only. Is He able? and is He willing? The answer to the first one is that He is Divine, and that means that He is omnipotent. He declares that He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto Him, and that those who do come shall in no wise be cast out. In fact, He sums up the whole matter in this one golden

sentence: "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands." When He speaks of "them," He refers to those who trust Him and follow Him.

So much for what Christ says. Now what has He done? He has actually laid down His life as a ransom for you and me. He has borne our sins in His own body on the cross. He has made an atonement for our sins, so that God may be just, and yet may pardon our sins for Christ's sake. If the Bible teaches anything, it teaches all this. Christ's atonement satisfies the holy God you and I have sinned against. He tells us so. That is enough. You and I have nothing to do but take Him at His word. If you and I accept literally this declaration of God, and if we honestly entrust our souls to the atoning Saviour, and then are lost for ever, it will clearly be no fault of ours. We have a right to hold the Lord Jesus responsible for our everlasting welfare. No responsibility that I can exact from the Cunard Steamship Company for a safe passage to Europe can compare with the responsibility laid upon the Son of God for the salvation of my soul. Their powers are limited; but His power is unlimited. He promises to "keep that which I entrust to Him;" and if I do just

what He bids me, then the whole question of my salvation or of my utter perdition rests entirely on the atoning Son of God. I cannot more literally entrust a valuable package to an express company, and expect them to deliver it at its destination, than I entrust my immortal soul to the keeping of Jesus Christ, with the expectation of finding it safe "at that great day."

II. But I expect other things from Jesus, if I make Him my trustee, besides my final salvation from the woes of hell. I expect present protection and help. He says that He is "able to keep me from falling." The pathway of daily life has many slippery places. Hundreds are falling, to their own wounding and to their shame. But I never yet have heard of a good man having fallen when he was trying to do Christ's will and trusting on Christ's help. Every fall, without one exception, came from venturing upon sinful ground, or from venturing upon self-support. The moment that Peter trusted Peter he sunk; the moment that he trusted Christ he found the waters like granite under his feet. When a genuine Christian sins, he finds forgiveness. That is what is meant by being "preserved *blameless*." When he reaches heaven, he will sin no longer, and then he will be "pre-

sented *faultless*." Christ's blood washes away the blame here. In heaven he shall walk in white, for into that pure atmosphere shall enter nothing that defileth.

The limits of this brief chapter do not allow me to recount all the priceless blessings which flow from trusting Jesus. If you make Him your trustee, you can roll burdens over on Him when they become too heavy for you. Not your work; for that you alone can perform. But the issue of if you can leave to Him. I am responsible for the discourses I preach and the life I live; but not for the conversion of a single soul. That is Christ's office, not mine. He is the trustee of every Christian's labours. If our Brother Moody enters cultured and fastidious Boston with this firm conviction, he can "laugh at the shaking of the spear" of boastful infidelity.

What a delightful peace this complete trust in Jesus brings! There are many anxieties that make us "lie awake" in this world of perils and disasters. "To-morrow morning I will go and draw that deposit out of the bank," says the wakeful merchant, whose suspicions have been aroused as to its safety. But the true believer can lie down and sleep serenely. His deposit for eternity is secure. There is no torture more intense than distrust. The wife

who doubts the love of him to whom she has plighted her all, the mother who fears that the son of her bosom was deceiving her, feel the pangs of a purgatory every hour. Half of the sorrows which the professed Christian feels arise from his wanton, wicked distrust of Christ. When I trust a faithless fellow-creature, it is his fault if I am deceived. But when I suffer from foolish uneasiness about what I have committed to Jesus, the fault is all my own.

While writing these lines a young friend has come into my room to seek counsel in regard to her soul. I addressed to her this one decisive question : "Do you honestly desire and strive to avoid sin, and are you willing to do what Christ commands you ?" She modestly answered : "Yes." "Can you trust Jesus as an atoning Saviour with your soul ?" To this she firmly responded : "I can." Then I said to her : "Your loving Master's voice is to you, Daughter, go in peace. Thy faith hath made thee whole." She went home lightened. She seemed to know whom she was trusting, and that He would keep the precious, immortal trust until the great day.

HOW WELL JESUS KNOWS US.

IN our last chapter we spoke of Jesus Christ as the soul's trustee. As a sequel to that chapter we wish now to speak of the perfect knowledge which Christ possesses of our nature and of all our necessities. When we are seriously sick, we prefer to send for a physician who not only understands his business, but who also understands our constitution and temperament and all our vulnerable points. Standing on the outside of us, the doctor ought to know as much as possible of "what is in us," if he would attack the disease to advantage.

Jesus is the only soul-physician who deserves my perfect confidence. He "knows what is in man." Not only in mankind, but in my own individual heart. As the watchmaker is familiar with every wheel and pivot in the watch he has made, so the Divine Jesus knows His own workmanship. This is the infinite advantage which Christianity has over every other system. It submits the human soul

to the Maker as well as to the Redeemer of that soul.

Christ knows full well that the deadly disease that man is suffering from is *sin*. His unerring word hath “concluded all men under it.” This is the universal malady that taints every heart, shapes every bitter word, breeds every sigh, sharpens every sword, forges every fetter, darkens every sad home, wrecks every splendid intellect that has become a power to destroy, and has dug every grave. Knowing just what the disease is, Jesus also knows that He alone can cure it. The idiotic delusion that man is capable of self-salvation finds no countenance—no, not for an instant—in all His profound and penetrating Gospel of sublime love. In this day of “advanced thought,” when liberal pulpits and presses are puffing their quackeries and proclaiming that man is capable of self-development into all the religion which God demands, what a relief and joy it is that Jesus knows just how to cure the deadly disease. For this very purpose He came to earth. “Neither is there salvation in any other.” With a perfect knowledge of the fatal malady and a perfect remedy for it, Christ Jesus united Himself to our nature, became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and thus tasted death

for us on the cross. There were two sides to my disease as a sinner. There was a curse upon me, and opposition to God within me. Jesus, by bearing the curse due to my sin in His own crucified body, took away the curse. By reconciling me to my offended God and my God to me, he took away the opposition. The old enmity gave way. The cancer was cut out; the condemnation gone; and the new condition of pardon and peace, acceptance and adoption, comes in its stead. God is in Christ, reconciling me to Himself. No longer an heir of hell, I become an heir of heaven. No longer a leprous outcast, I can come into my Father's household a cleansed and accepted child, with the new blood in my veins and the new joy in my heart.

He who knew my spiritual disease, and how to cure it, knows also who of us is cured. We may deceive our fellow-men by claiming that we have been restored. An applicant for admission into Christ's fold may deceive the pastor or whoever may be delegated to receive persons into church membership. Some who are either carried away by temporary excitement or misled by false advisers may deceive themselves. But Jesus knoweth them that are His. "I know my 'sheep, and am

known of mine." The Shepherd can call every one of the flock by name. No putting on of "sheep's clothing" can mislead the Omniscient Shepherd. Among the thousands in Chicago, or Boston, or elsewhere who are professing conversion just now, it is not possible that Jesus Himself shall be mistaken as to a solitary case. He reads every heart to the bottom. Not every one who saith, "Lord, Lord," in a prayer-meeting is truly cured; but only those who bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. Not every one who attends a "meeting for converts" is sure of a place in Christ's fold; but they who truly follow the Shepherd. There is a solemn warning in this fact. But there is an inspiring comfort, too, in the fact that the Saviour knows every one who is saved.

Not only does He know just who are in His flock, but also everything that is in every one of them—their good points and their weak points, their besetting sins and their newly-developed graces. It is half the battle in family government for the parent to understand thoroughly his child. One boy can be led by a cotton thread; another one will break an ox-chain. The parent who is too indolent or too blind to study his children deserves the whip of scorpions which their mis-

government will yet lay on His bleeding heart. But Jesus, the Divine teacher, when He takes an immortal soul under His care and into His training school, understands His pupils perfectly. He reads Mary through and through when she sits at His feet, and cheers her up by the assurance that the "better portion" is hers. In his raw inexperience Peter may brag of his loyalty loudly; but the Master takes him down by the startling announcement, "Before the cock crows, thou shalt *deny* me three times over!" Jesus detects the splendid capacities in Paul for the very foremost apostleship; but He also has a place for humble Tryphena and Tryphosa, and even a use for Dorcas's needle. He knows just what is in every one of us, and just how much can be got out of us. This makes Him not a hard master, but the most kind and considerate of employers and guardians. He never lays on weak shoulders the loads which only stronger ones can carry. All the while, too, how sweetly come the encouraging words, "My grace is sufficient for thee. I call you not my servant; I call you my *friend*."

Jesus is perfectly acquainted also with all our weaknesses. "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are but dust." That poor tippler

whom Brother Gough rescued from the dramshop cannot understand his own frailty better than Jesus does. The battle with his old appetite is seen nowhere more distinctly than by that Redeemer who was once tempted in *one* way that He might succour those who are tempted in *any* way. The secret sorrow which I dare hardly breathe to my wife I can freely unbosom to my Saviour. Ah ! how well He knows every thorn that pricks my foot and every wound that trickles its silent drops from the bleeding spirit ! This is a wondrous encouragement to prayer. For my Physician never will administer the wrong medicine, and I may be sure that He never will refuse to hear my knock or my pull at "the night bell" in the hour of distress.

This fact of Christ's perfect knowledge of our soul's needs and requirements throws great light on providences otherwise very dark. It explains a great many mysteries—why one of us is put up and another put down ; why one is prospered and another impoverished ; why one seems to run before the breeze and another is buffeted with contrary winds. It explains why Jesus applies the lancet to some Christians who are getting too plethoric with prosperity and sumptuous fare. He is too skilful to open the wrong vein, too wise to

apply the pruning-knife to the wrong vine. Dear loving Master! let Him probe to the bottom, if the wound require it. He knoweth what is in me; yea, and He knoweth what ought to come *out* of me, if I would attain to the health and robustness of a true disciple. Better, far better the probe and the pruning-knife here, than to be cast out at last as incurable cumberers of His fold. If it is a joy to me to "know whom I have believed," it is equally a joy that He "knoweth them that are his."

SEVEN THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT JESUS.

IN a previous chapter we treated of Christ's knowledge of us, and our wants and weaknesses. Let us now look at the seven things which we know about our Lord and Redeemer. Nearly all of them may be found in that first love-letter which the Apostle John addressed to the churches.

I. The first fact we know is that Jesus is Divine. John says, "We know that the Son of God is come." How did he know this? We answer that Jesus proved His divinity by His works, and asserted it by His words. If He were not the Son of God, then He uttered a blasphemous falsehood; and for a being of such marvellous kindness, unselfishness, personal purity, and holy life to have uttered so stupendous a falsehood were a moral impossibility. We, in turn, know that Jesus was Divine from the direct testimony of the Scriptures. Saying nothing about other Scriptures, it is directly

asserted by John himself that “this” (*i.e.*, this person, Christ Jesus) “is the true God and eternal life.” How any candid Socinian, who pretends to accept the inspiration of the Bible, can gainsay this point-blank declaration is more than we can fathom. The central truth of John’s epistle is this: “Jesus is the Son of God.” Take the doctrine of gravitation out of Sir Isaac Newton’s natural philosophy, and the system falls into rubbish. Take the divinity of Jesus Christ out of the New Testament and out of the plan of redemption, and they become a delusion and a mockery.

II. This same beloved disciple declares the chief object of Christ’s incarnation when he says, “*Ye know* that he was manifested to take away our sins.” The most ever-present, ever-pressing fact in the moral world is the existence of sin. This is the universal malady and misery. We have just come this morning from two households who are heart-broken by sin. They would both accept a coffin in the dwelling as a lighter sorrow. As sin is the greatest of human curses, so deliverance from the guilt and the thraldom of sin would be the greatest blessing which humanity could experience. Its dominion is degradation; its doom is death. Jesus did not come to take all sin out

of the world. But He did come to take away its bondage and its condemning curse from every one who will accept of Him as a sufficient ransomer, and of His blood as a sufficient atonement for sin. Jesus "bore our sins in his own body on the cross." This doctrine of Jesus as the sin-bearer is the core of the New Testament. It is the one doctrine of sufficient importance to be commemorated by a perpetual church-rite. The Lord's Supper is the monument of the Atonement. How can any person come, understandingly, to that table, if he does not *know* that Jesus died to save him from his sins?

III. Deliverance from the curse and punishment of sin is a marvellous blessing. Yet it is a negative blessing: it only saves from remorse and retribution. The positive boon of a life eternal is a blessing beyond words to compass. Joseph delivered from an Egyptian dungeon is a happy man; but Joseph exalted to the second chariot of the empire with a chain of gold about his neck, is a man who dare not be ungrateful, for the stones in the streets would condemn him. Jesus does more than deliver me from hell's prison-house. He secures for me heaven's palace of glory. For the third great fact which John declares is that "you

who *believe* on the name of the Son of God may know that *ye have eternal life.*" This means more than bare existence. A poor wretch may exist and be miserable. Eternal life in God's Word signifies life at its very highest realization of peace, knowledge, purity, and bliss ; life in communion with God ; life where no sin defileth, and no death intrudes ; a life of ineffable holiness, whose every emotion is an ecstasy. This life has its imperfect beginnings at the "new birth" of conversion. It reaches its acme in heaven. But of every genuine Christian it may be truly said that he "hath eternal life." They that trust on Jesus have Jesus. They that have Jesus have the only life which God can give. They that have this life have it for ever. To possess such a faith, with its transforming power, and not be conscious of it, seems utterly preposterous. Salvation is not guess-work. Jesus guarantees eternal life to them that are His.

IV. For His inspired apostle assures us that saving faith carries with it an inward evidence, a witness of the Spirit, an unalterable conviction that brings solid peace. He says : "I *know whom* I have believed, and that he is able to *keep* that which I have committed unto him against that day." Paul had made Jesus his trustee, and had

put his everlasting welfare into Jesus's hands. So may I do what Paul did, and may hold Christ responsible for my salvation as long as I keep His commandments. Upon that Divine rock I am for ever safe; but not safe for one instant if I leave that rock. "Through faith I am kept by the power of God unto salvation." If faith lets go, all is gone. While faith holds to Jesus, I am more sure of salvation than that the sun will rise to-morrow. God has not pledged an eternal sun-rising; but He has pledged eternal life to those who trust and obey his Son Jesus Christ.

V. The fifth fact that every Christian may know is that Jesus is our intercessor, and is the bestower of answers to our prayers. John the Apostle (with no fear of any first century Tyndalls before his eyes) expressly affirms "this is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." Observe the conditions clearly, for there is a great deal of slovenly thinking and talking about prayer. God does not promise to gratify all our whims or selfish desires. He gives nothing that is contrary to "his will." Many good things are undoubtedly

in accordance with that will—such as pardon of sin, spiritual help to serve Him, and the gift of the Divine Spirit. Now, if we will only leave our Master to decide what we ought to have, we may know that our prayers will bring the answer that is best for us. I do not believe that there is such a thing in the universe as a neglected prayer ever breathed by docile, submissive faith. Emptied of self, I am sure of being filled by Jesus.

VI. Another thing the veteran Paul knew, and that was that “all things work together for good to them that love God.” He was just then speaking of the “sufferings of this present time,” and the “all things” evidently refer to trials and sharp afflictions. Paul knew that crowns were made out of crosses. The diadem which Jesus wears was fashioned on Calvary, and the heavenly crowns which we may aspire to must be wrought out of such costly material as penitence, submission, suffering, patience, toil, and self-crucifixion.

VII. Do you doubt this, my brother? Then I have a Bible-passage for you—the seventh of the precious things we know about Jesus. It is the best wine kept to the last. “Beloved, we know that when he shall appear we shall be *like him*, for we shall see him as he is.” Like Jesus! Our

crosses also turned into crowns ! Our bodies fashioned like unto His glorious body ! As we have borne the image of the earthy, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. These glorious things we *know*. Let God be true, though every man should prove a liar.

Now let us gather into one bouquet from the King's garden these seven fragrant flowers. Jesus the Son of God ; Jesus our sin-bearer ; Jesus the giver of eternal life ; Jesus the keeper of our undying souls ; Jesus the hearer of our prayers ; Jesus the chastener, who can turn crosses into crowns ; and Jesus the wonder-worker, who can change us into eternal likeness unto Himself ! These flowers will keep sweet till heaven dawns.

HELD BY THE RIGHT HAND.

“**T**HOU hast holden me by my right hand ;
thou shalt afterwards receive me to glory.”

This is one of the most inspiring and invigorating utterances that ever fell from any man who was under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. It is an experience, and also an assurance. For this world, an actual experience ; for the world to come, a glorious assurance. The religion of Jesus Christ is an experimental thing—something to be tested by practical results. It claims an actual relation between weak, sinful man and his Heavenly Father ; between the sinner and his divine Saviour. The language of this passage is not the language of excited imagination. Millions of the most profoundly intelligent men and women who ever lived have repeated this same strong declaration : “Thou has holden *me* by my right hand.”

A steamer sinks in mid-ocean. One of the passengers, nearly exhausted by long swimming, sees a loaded lifeboat approaching. He reaches

out his weary hand to a strong man in the boat, who grasps it, and keeps the swimmer afloat until a safe ship's deck is reached. The act of the exhausted man in the water is an act of trust. The act of the strong man in the boat is one of help and sustaining strength. The salvation of the drowning sufferer begins with the act of the clasping of those two hands. It is consummated by keeping those two hands firmly together. The withdrawal of either would be fatal.

Now the salvation of any sinner depends on his vital spiritual union to the Lord Jesus. Conversion is the act of joining our hands to the pierced hand of the crucified Saviour. The new life begins with the taking of Christ's hand, and his taking hold, in infinite love, of our weak hands. Up to the time of his regeneration, every sinner tries to walk in his own strength, and goes his own wicked way of disobedience. He chooses his own path, and walks in the ways of his own selfish heart. The rash and reckless Alpine traveller who should attempt to ascend the Matterhorn without a guide would not be more insane than is every human being who, in this world of temptation, attempts to live without God. Yet every impenitent soul ventures on this terrible experiment.

The beginning of the Christian life is in our grasp of faith on the hand of Jesus. Or, speaking more correctly, it is the allowing of Christ to grasp our "right hand ;" for He first loved us. Observe that it is not the left hand which is to be given to Christ, but the *right* hand—the effective working hand. Then the new believer can sing, "He leadeth me." Then he can confidently pray, "Lord, lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies." Henceforth his best and sweetest aspiration is :

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best ;
Winding or straight, it matters not,
It leads me to Thy *rest*.

To every trusting soul the divine promise is : "I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee." What a strong grasp that is which Jesus gives to poor, weak human nature. All the strength which any converted soul possesses is gotten through this contact and union with Christ the Omnipotent.

Who supposes that such a man as my eloquent friend Gough, with his nervous impulsive temperament, and that latent demon of appetite for strong drink lurking within him, would ever have held out for thirty years, if the Lord had not holden him by his right hand? The fatal mistake of many a reformed inebriate is that when he lets loose of the bottle, he does not grasp hold on God. Very few are ever permanently reformed without the help of the divine grace to steady them over the slippery places of temptation.

Not only is Christ's grasp a strong one—it is a long one also. Here is the only foundation for the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Strictly speaking, it is Christ's perseverance *with* the believer that ensures his salvation. Jesus loveth His own unto the end. "None shall pluck them out of My hand." As long as my hand is clasped in my Saviour's mighty grasp, all hell cannot sever us. This union must be continuous on my part also; for there is a constant temptation for me to draw out my hand suddenly and try to walk alone. "Just this once," whispers pride and presumption. Selfishness whispers; "Yonder is smoother walking; go there." Whenever I have tried this experiment of wicked folly, then came the back-

slider's wanderings and bruising falls. Peter undertook once to go alone, and he fell within an hour. Afterward he said, "I will trust;" and he fell into a sweet slumber in the dungeon to be awakened by an angel.

There is a perpetual need of being held by our right hand; for life's journey is over an untried road, with steep hills of difficulty constantly constantly confronting us. Fear looks up the precipitous pathway, and says, "That is too much for me." Jesus replies, "Fear not, I will help thee." And, with our five fingers of faith made fast in his hold of love, we push upward to the summit. Life is full of "slippery places," too. We come upon them unawares, as Alpine travellers come upon a glare of ice covered by thin coats of snow. Sudden prosperity is a slippery place for any man to tread upon. Where one child of God is cast down by adversity, a score slip and tumble through the temptations of prosperity. I could name hundreds of church members whose religion has declined in proportion as their incomes went up. Great popularity is a position of peril. "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you." Business men tell us that they are constantly exposed to slippery practices, and that it is increasingly diffi-

cult to make money with a clean conscience and the approval of God. Political pursuits are proverbially full of pitfalls. Sudden assaults of the devil beset every Christian as they beset Joseph and David, and Him who was greater than either. As a child walking over a slippery and dangerous path cries out, "Father, I am falling!" and has but a moment to catch its father's hand, so every believer sees hours when only the hand of Jesus comes between him and the abysses of destruction. "When I cried, My foot slippeth! thy mercy, O Lord, held me up."

And so every pilgrim of Jesus goes on his upward way. As he climbs a rugged steep, panting under his heavy load, he cries out, "My burden is too heavy for me!" A heavenly Friend at his side answers, "Cast thy burden upon Me. I will hold thee by thy right hand, and *afterward* receive thee to glory." Again I seem to see that pilgrim, sorely beset by evil spirits. He cries out, "Lord, save me, or I perish." The answer comes quickly: "None shall be able to pluck thee out of my hand." Before the pilgrim there stretches a dizzy plateau of ice, broken by many a concealed crevasse many fathoms deep. Still the assuring voice keeps speaking—"Hold fast to *Me*, and afterward I will receive thee to glory."

Higher and still higher the trusting soul mounts upward. At length a glittering gateway opens. The gate is of solid pearl, and it opens upon a street of pure gold—as it were, transparent glass. As the pilgrim enters the overwhelming light, the last words that we catch are these: “O blessed Jesus! Thou hast holden me by my right hand, and now Thou art receiving me to **GLORY.**”

“SO DID NOT I.”

AS we walk through history with a Diogenes's lantern in our hand, it is always pleasant to come upon an honest and a noble man. Such an one was NEHEMIAH, the builder and reformer of Jerusalem. He stands in the Scripture gallery of characters as John Hampden's statue stands in the line of illustrious worthies which flanks the entrance to the British Parliament.

Nehemiah was a man who understood the power of that prodigious word “*No.*” When he left the Persian capital at Shushan, he went down to Jerusalem determined to do something to relieve his suffering people there. The dear old city was in ruins. The Jews who had returned thither from Babylon were oppressed and plundered. The same kind of abuses had crept in which have disgraced some of our city governments. Nehemiah lays hold of practical reforms with an unsparing hand. First he arouses the people with a trumpet-peal to “*rise*

up and build " the ruined walls. Then he abolishes the oppressive taxation, and the desecrations of the Sabbath and the Temple. His predecessors in office had been receiving big salaries, and had allowed their underlings to fleece the people. Nehemiah might have cited their example as a precedent, and followed in their wake—after the manner in which greedy officeholders or plunderers thrust their arms into public treasuries in our day. But his simple, manly statement is, "*So did not I*, because of the fear of God." Nobly said! We wish every young man would write those sharp, ringing words in his note-book, and determine to make the same answer whenever he is tempted to do a selfish or a wicked act.

The most tremendous word in the English language is the short yet mighty word NO. • It has been the pivot on which innumerable destinies have turned, for this world and the next. Spoken at the right moment, it has saved multitudes from disgrace, from ruin—yes, from an endless hell! The splendid career of Joseph turned on the prompt "No" spoken at the very nick of time. Had he stopped to parley with that wanton woman (as too many young men stop to talk with a bright-eyed temptress in the street), he would have been

lost. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" saved him from the dizzy edge of the precipice. Daniel might easily have said to himself, "Oh! everybody about the court here drinks wine and lives high on the king's meat. I do not want to be thought queer or puritanical." He dared to be singular. At the end of two weeks he had a cleaner countenance and a sweeter breath than any of the fast-livers in the palace. "So did not I" was the motto of this sturdy young teetotaler. If he had yielded to the current of temptation and drifted with it, we never should have heard of such a man as Daniel.

All the people who make a marked success in life, and who achieve any good work for God, are the people who are not ashamed to be thought singular. The man who runs with the crowd counts for nothing. It is when he turns about and faces the multitude who are rushing on to do evil that he commands every eye. Then by a bold protest he may "put a thousand to flight." So the young monk, Luther, turned about and faced the hosts of the Papacy. His heroic "No," nailed up on the church-door of Wittenberg, aroused Europe from its delusive and deadly dreams. Standing alone, he was reinforced by the Almighty.

But it is not only the Luthers, the Wilberforces, the John Quincy Adamses, and the Sumners who make their mark by being singular. Every young man and woman, in their humbler spheres, must come out and be separate from the company of sinners, if they wish to save their characters and their souls. The downward pull of sin is tremendous. To be able firmly to say "Yet will I not" requires the grace from above in the heart. There is a subtle pull, also, in the drift of sinful fashion and usage, which carries away every one who is not well established on a Bible conscience. Three-fourths of all the persons who are drowned on the sea-shore are swept out by the under-current. This is the secret influence which takes hold of so many church-members and carries them off into extravagant living, into sinful amusements, and all manner of worldly conformities. Every true Christian is bound to be a nonconformist. If he is not well anchored for Christ, he is swept away by the under-current. The bottom of the great deep is strewed with such backsliders.

I would press this truth home upon every young man who reads this article: Your salvation depends on your ability to say "No." When your principle is put to the test, ask God's help and stand

firm. The messmates of Captain Hedley Vicars sneered at him as a "Methodist" and a fanatic. He put his Bible on the table in his tent, and then stood by his colours. A British soldier once told me that Vicars was a spiritual power in his regiment. We had just such Christian heroes in our army during the war.

In every school the difference is clearly marked between the boy who has moral pluck and the boy who is mere pulp. The one knows how to say "No;" the other is so afraid of being thought "verdant" that he soon kills everything pure and fresh and manly in his character, and dries up into a premature hardness of heart. Five lads were once gathered in a room at boarding-school, and four of them engaged in a game of cards, which was expressly forbidden by the rules. One of the players was called out. The three said to the quiet lad, who was busy at something else, "Come, take a hand with us. It is too bad to have the game broken up." "I do not know one card from another." "That makes no difference," exclaimed the players; "we will show you how. Come along." Now, that was a turning-point in that lad's life. He nobly said, "My father does not wish me to play cards, and I will not disobey him."



That sentence settled the matter, and settled his position among his associates. He was the boy who could say "No;" and thenceforward his victories were made easy and sure. I well remember the pressure brought to bear in college upon every young man to join in a wine-drink, or to take a hand in some contraband amusement. Some timber got well seasoned. Some of the other sort got well rotted through with sensuality and vice. The Nehemiahs at college have been Nehemiahs ever since. The boy was father of the man.

The only motive that could hold back the brave nonconformist at Jerusalem was a godly conscience. "So did not I, *because of the fear of God*." This ever-present principle held him firm when temptation struck him, as the under-currents strike against the keel. What the fear of God did for Nehemiah, faith in the Lord Jesus will do for you. Christ must be to you a pattern, and He must be to you a power. It is not enough to believe on Jesus. You must "add to your faith *courage*." (for that is the real meaning of the word translated "virtue" in our English Bibles). Then, with Christ as your model, and Christ as your inward might, you will always be able to face down temptation with the iron answer, "So will not I."

ROOTED BY THE RIVERS.

THE spring has been calling the roll in orchard and forest. Every living tree has ere this responded by issuing its leaves, or bedecking itself with blossoms. Some are well on their way with tiny germs of fruit. The dead trees give no answer to the call. A sick tree or a dead tree is a sad sight, especially if it once shaded our childhood's sports, or shook down its generous fruit into our baskets.

A diseased or dying Christian is a far sadder sight. The marks of health and growth in a Christian are described in the Bible by the marks of health and growth in a tree. The tests of life or of decay and death are the same. One of the most happy descriptions of a flourishing Christian ever written is that one contained in the seventeenth chapter of Jeremiah: "He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the rivers, and shall not see when heat

cometh, but her leaf shall be green. She shall not be troubled in the year of drought, neither shall she cease from yielding fruit."

This is God's idea of a flourishing Christian. Hardly any text in His word affords a better test for each one of us to try himself by than this beautiful but searching passage. It is very thorough. It includes both the inward motive and the outward life. Let us look at ourselves for a few moments as this passage reveals to us what we ought to be.

(1.) The first mark of a healthy Christian is that he is rooted by the rivers of water. In that Oriental country water was the staff of life to man and beast and plant. A tree whose roots were not kissed by some unfailing vein of moisture was doomed to certain death. What the root is to a tree are the secret motives and affections of the heart to each one of us. No part of the tree is so invisible as its roots. But the condition of the tree soon reports just where its roots are and what they are about. Dryness below ground soon means deadness above ground. The roots of our religious life are our secret motives and the affections which govern us. God only beholds them, but men soon discover what they are from the evidence of

daily conduct. We wonder, for example, why a certain church-member is so lax in his devotions and loose in his practices. The reason is that, while his trunk and his branches are over on the *church side* of the wall, his roots run under the wall, and dwell in the bad soil on the other side. Outwardly the man is a Christian professor. Inwardly he is a thorough "man of the world," with no genuine love of Jesus pervading his heart. A Christless heart will soon yield a Christless life. "If ye abide in me ye shall bear fruit." When the Master said this He indicated clearly that heart-union to Himself was the only source of permanent Christian living.

Some men root down into covetousness. There is no need of shaking their boughs with the vain hope of getting any apples of liberality. Others root into secret sensuality. Their thoughts are impure. Lust fills their souls. By-and-by they are detected in some open act of lechery or drunkenness. The conversion of a sensual man or woman which does not radically change the affections and principles of the heart is not a genuine conversion. The reason why so many "reformed" sensualists go speedily back to their cups or their licentiousness is that their roots of character were never

touched. They were never transplanted into Christ. They were never "renewed in the *inner* man by the Divine Spirit."

A true servant of Christ draws his motives of action from his deep loyalty, his deep heart-love to his dear Lord. Up through these roots comes his daily devotion to those things which are pure and holy and of good report. These are the motives which keep him self-denying and steadfast. They hold him firm in moments of sudden temptation, as stout roots hold the tree against the assaults of a gale. Paul was so rooted and grounded in love to his Saviour that no blast of persecution ever shook him for an instant. Strangers must have wondered why these early apostles so rejoiced in bearing bloody stripes, and in being locked up within filthy dungeons. They little knew the depth and the strength of that victorious love of the Crucified which lived down in their bottommost souls, and kept them by the "rivers of water." Jesus kept them, and Jesus fed their strength. This is the double office of a root: it holds and it feeds. All the nourishment of the vital sap issues from it. Now, then, here is the test question with me, and with you, my brother. Are our hearts, in all their affections and desires and motives, so united to

Christ Jesus that we *draw Him up* into our daily lives? Do we keep the connection close with secret prayer? Does this inward love of our Lord underlie our whole character? Is Jesus in us? Are His laws our laws, His interests our interests, and is to please Him the first instinct of our being? Then we are rooted by the river of unfailing waters.

(2.) While the soul thus reaches down through its every rootlet into Christ's deep, cool well, there is no danger that our leaves will wither. "Our leaf shall be green." Some professors have a very dingy look. Their clammy leaves get so powdered over with the dust of worldliness that they are very unsightly objects. They are not attractive with any beauty of holiness. When people eye them closely, they see only cross censoriousness, or stingy selfishness, or frivolous formality. There are others whose leaf turns yellow very soon after they are set out in the Church. This betrays lack of moisture at the root, or perhaps a secret worm of sin there that is killing the tree by inches. The leaf is the tell-tale of the root and the soil. It is a wretched mistake to deal with the externals of our conduct while we neglect the condition of our hearts. If the heart is by the rivers of water the leaf will always be glossy and green.

(3.) Nor will the drought affect a well-rooted Christian. Some church-members are only flourishing during the heavy rains of a revival time. The rest of the year they are brown and barren. If pastors get sick of such periodical professors, how weary Jesus must be with them! But the joy of every pastor is that evergreen Christian who, when the community is as dry spiritually as summer dust, keeps his heart fresh, and his prayers fervent, and his hands open, and his daily life as beautiful as a palm-tree.

He never ceases to yield fruit. Every year is a bearing year. It is his fixed habit to attend the place of prayer, to give according to his means, to pay every man his due, to share his loaf with the suffering, to stand for Christ on every occasion and before every company. He speaks out when cowards are dumb. He is "always abounding" in the work of the Lord. We go to such a man as we go to a generous old Vergalieu pear-tree in the month of September, and never come away empty. The ground under his boughs always has something sweet for our basket.

And when God *shakes* such deep-rooted Christians with severe trials, how the ripe fruits do rattle down. Blessed be the discipline which makes me

reach out my soul's roots into closer union with Jesus! Blessed be the dews of the Spirit which keep my leaf ever green! Blessed be the trials which shake down the ripe golden fruits from the branches!

HELP FROM THE THRONE.

ONCE, and once only, we read in the Bible of a “throne of grace.” It is a beautiful expression, drawn from the mercy-seat, where the high priest presented his offerings, made his supplications for the people, and received answers from God. Jesus is our intercessor, and therefore every believer may come to that throne of mercy, and come “boldly” too. The original Greek is “with freedom of speech.” And we are permitted to come very often; for the only limitation is that we are to ask for help at the throne in every “time of need.”

These emergencies arise constantly. An hour of temptation is an hour of need. A time of sudden adversity—as when the first blow of the cyclone tears our canvas from the spars—this is a time of need. Sudden prosperity, too, may be equally dangerous, and demand an immediate supply of grace to bear it. If a disagreeable duty

is rolled on us, or a most irritating provocation is thrown like a torpedo at our feet, then we must have instant grace for the emergency. Not a day in our Christian lives but brings its hour of need. What a glorious promise it is, brother, that you and I are allowed to come directly to the throne, and obtain *help* for every one of these thousand necessities ! This single verse in the fourth chapter of Hebrews would be worth making a revelation from heaven for. How does God help us? What are His methods of supply?

(I.) God does not give us ready money. He issues His promissory notes, and then pays them when faith presents them at the throne. Each one of us has a cheque-book. Just as every note of the Bank of England represents just so much bullion in its vaults, so a Christian's promises represent "the unsearchable riches of Christ." His assets are infinite. When we get bankrupt in duty, we sometimes talk as if the Divine Grace had "suspended" or "broke ;" but the failure is with us. We do not go to the throne and present the promises for help. Jesus never repudiates. He longs to give more than we have the faith to ask. If half the time spent in worrying over our troubles were spent in seeking help from God, we should sooner get relief.



Too often we fall to making an ado, like the hired weepers and wailers in the house of Jairus. Unbelief wrings its hands, and cries, "All is over!" If we would quietly call for Jesus, He would come to us in our hour of need, and serenely say, "What mean ye by this ado? the maiden is not dead but sleepeth." Then we would put all the noisy complainers and the disgraceful fears out of the room, and calmly speak the word "Talitha cumi—maiden arise!" I often think that this story of Christ's raising of the dead maiden was given us to teach Christians how to act in times of trouble. Instead of letting our unbelief rave and tear its hair, we should call straightway for the MASTER. Our emergency is His opportunity. The time for help is our time of need.

(II.) God sometimes helps us by means of adverse circumstances. He makes troubles to work together for good to them that love Him. What a train of troubles overtook Joseph from the time when he was put into the pit until he was put into the prison! But by-and-by he looks his mean and blushing brothers right in their faces, and says, "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant *it unto good.*" So our God is constantly overruling our troubles for the advancement of our good and

of His glory. It helps a vine to be pruned. Our Father uses the knife when He sees that we require it. It is only one of His ways of helping us in the time of need.

(III.) Every true life of faith has scenes in it when help comes—as it did to Elijah at the brook Cherith—from an unexpected quarter. The raven lights at our feet with food, and the dry brook begins to sing again with water. That is a good story which Spurgeon tells us of his grandfather, when the family cow died, and left the poor pastor's children without their staff of life.

“‘What will you do now?’ said my grandmother.

“‘I cannot tell what we shall do now,’ said he, ‘but I know what God will do; God will provide for us. We must have milk for the children.’

“The next morning there came £20 to him. He had never made application to the fund for the relief of ministers; but on that day there were £5 left when they had divided the money, and one said, ‘There is poor Mr. Spurgeon down in Essex, suppose we send it to him.’ The chairman—a Mr. Morley of his day—said, ‘We had better make it £10, and I’ll give £5.’ Another £5 was offered by another member, if a like amount

could be raised to make it up to £20 ; which was done. They knew nothing about my grandfather's cow ; but God did, you see ; and there was the new cow for him. And those gentlemen in London were not aware of the importance of the service which they had rendered."

The charm of this little incident is that the elder Spurgeon really took his Lord at His word when He said, "Take no anxious thought for the morrow." This is the way that George Müller manages his orphan-houses. He goes to the throne, and God puts it into good men's hearts to send to Brother Müller the funds to help in time of need. Brethren ! He who sits on that throne of grace knows what things ye have need of, and knows the best way to help us.

It may not be my way ; it may not be thy way,
But yet in His own way, the Lord will provide.

(IV.) As long as we work on God's line He will aid us. When we attempt to work on our own lines He rebukes us with failure. When Peter drew his sword to defend Jesus and himself, the Master calmly says, "Put up thy sword !" But when Peter stood up to preach at Pentecost, that same Jesus rewarded him with three thousand souls in

one day. Here is encouragement for faithful pastors.

(V.) Our last thought is that the bell-rope of fervent prayer reaches up to the throne. Let us pull that bell in our time of need with a strong hand. When thou hast pulled it boldly, wait till the blessing comes.

THE SECRET OF POWER.

MY beloved friend D. L. Moody is not a genius. He has no scholastic culture. For many years he sold boots and shoes in Chicago. His power lies in his simple-hearted devotion to Christ. "This *one thing* he does." He saturates his mind with the Word of God, he seeks the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and then he throws himself into the work of doing good, seizing the first opportunities that offer, and labouring with those whom God puts in his way. At a London prayer-meeting I met Henry Varley, the "London Butcher," a man who once kept his butcher's stall during the week, and preached Jesus Christ to the masses on the Sabbath. His work so grew upon him that he has laid aside his cleaver and his butcher's frock, and devotes his whole time to preaching the gospel among London's one million of ignorant people. Varley is not a genius either. He has no diploma from Eton or Oxford. Yet hundreds of

scholarly graduates from the old universities fall far behind the converted butcher in successful winning of souls to Christ. His power lies in his fervid zeal and his prodigious earnestness to *save souls*.

And what is true of D. L. Moody and Henry Varley is also true of that remarkable man of faith, George Müller, who has gathered nearly ten thousand children into his orphan-houses at Ashley Down (near Bristol). I went one hundred miles to see George Müller, and reached Bristol just as his evening prayer-meeting was closing in "Bethesda Chapel." The audience were retiring. I went in by a back-door, and saw Mr. Müller standing behind the pulpit and talking with a poor boy. The lad seemed to be telling his story to the great, simple-hearted philanthropist; and as the good man listened he took down a memorandum on a card. I stood and looked at the beautiful tableau for some time—Müller and the poor boy laying their heads and hearts together. The countenance of Müller is benevolence itself. He is not a man of brilliant powers; he has some "crotchets," and does not believe in denominational systems and usages. But he has a tremendous *faith in God*, and in saving men by the power of love. His faith, too, works in common-sense methods. He is a capital

manager and the very furthest possible from the mere enthusiast. Those headlong visionaries who have tried to imitate him, without his sagacity and devout waiting on God, have failed most wretchedly.

We might go on and multiply the cases of men and women like these, and like Harlan Page, and Sarah Martin, and Carvosso, and Elizabeth Fry, and Father Mathew, the temperance apostle. Theirs was heart-power. They loved God and their fellow-creatures. They loved the Divine Jesus, and humbly sought to imitate Him by "going about doing good." Their vocation was not to write treatises or to utter profound or novel theories. Their only talent was the talent for doing good; their only gift was the gift of the Holy Spirit, which taught them what to do and how to do it.

Now there is a blessed encouragement in studying the lives and usefulness of such persons. For the great mass of Christian people are not geniuses. Men and women of great intellect and profound culture are the small minority. If the world must wait to be saved by them alone, then it is doomed to perish. But there are good people enough in this wicked world to-day to revolutionize it, if they

would only consecrate what they have and what they are to Jesus Christ, as the Pages, and Müllers, and Sarah Martins have done. If each individual Christian would only try to imitate Christ, the millennial era would dawn, and the "apostolic Church" would be once more realized.

The great truth to be followed nowadays is that every member of Christ's flock is called to Christ's service in some way or method. The humblest have a share in the work, and may have a share in the glory at the final day of coronation. That individual church in which the "rank and file" are all seeking the Spirit, and living lives of personal consecration to Christ, is more likely to be a powerful church than if it had a Whitfield or a Chalmers for its pastor. The need of the hour is not for more geniuses and scholars in the pulpit, but for more personal piety and consecration among the masses of God's people.

There is prodigious power in single-hearted love of Christ, and honest determination to do all the good that we can to a fellow-sinner. The *secret of power* is in *Christ dwelling in us*. It requires no genius, or erudition, or social rank to possess this blessed gift. A man of very moderate talents becomes a leading man in the Church or in

society as soon as Christ gets complete hold of him. I can point to more than one plain, modest, moderately-endowed Christian who has attained to a great propelling power in the community simply from the momentum of his godliness. He follows Christ so steadily and so zealously that he carries others with him by his sheer momentum. Great as is the result of what he aims to do, he does still more by his *unconscious influence*. His face shines from intercourse with God, though, like Moses, he may be in happy ignorance of its shining.

This is the power we need in our churches. Happy is that church that hath it in the fullest measure ! Blessed be that pastor who can do the most to promote it !

“LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY.”

THESE are times in which every follower of Jesus should be seeking an increase of spiritual life, and a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. The man who is empty himself cannot fill others. A half-converted professor is not likely to lead many sinners to the Saviour. How can the poor brother who is busy in blowing up his farthing rushlight to keep it from going out, how can he “so *shine* as to glorify” God, or be a burner to illuminate the way to Jesus? He may have a little life—just enough to keep him gasping feebly. What he needs is “life more abundantly.” Jesus promises this. He came to give it to those who seek aright for it.

(1.) One mark of this more abundant life is an increase of vigour. A cherry-tree in my garden used to drop down a few blossoms in May, but produced no cherries. Then we dug about it, and put in a load of fertilizer around the roots, and, lo! the next

July it was crimsoned with rich fruit. Its more abundant life made it bear profusely. The reason why any Christian does not produce the fruits of the Spirit is simple want of inward vigour of grace. He needs the tillage of prayer, and Bible-study, and a deep subsoiling of new repentance and new faith in Christ, a new work of the Holy Ghost. Half of the forces in Christ's army are either in the hospitals or off on furlough. The spiritual quickening which brings these useless invalids out of their beds, and these deserters back into the ranks, constitutes a genuine revival. When a church begins to feel this new life, sinners are awakened. The dead are raised. Jesus lives again in that community, in the persons of his active, Christlike followers.

(2.) A second evidence of the "life more abundantly" is an increase of faith. A small faith can move molehills. But it needs a stout faith to remove mountains. To grapple with stubborn sins, and to convert the "hard cases," and to scale the strongholds of Satan, is given only to those who have a prodigious hold on God. Luther spent three hours a day in prayer, in order to get the stamina for his battle with the Papacy. All things are possible to him that *trusts*. A pastor who can

believingly ask for great harvests, and then sows diligently, rarely comes into his barn with an empty wagon. The sheaves are filled up high. Spurgeon tells us of an earnest but uncouth minister who was sent into a desperately irreligious region ; and in his first sermon he said to the people, “Look here ! You may wriggle and twist, and twist, and you may harden your hearts as much as you like, but before this time twelvemonth five hundred souls here will be converted. I have asked this of the Lord, and He has given it to me.” Spurgeon says that the sturdy faith of this man of prayer got its reward, and within the year there were over seven hundred hopeful conversions. We need the faith which believes Jesus when He says, “If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.” “If God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely *give us all things?*”

(3.) With a more abundant life, believers will have a more abundant joy. A moping, sour, discontented, grumbling Christian is a disgrace to the name he bears. If such a poor bulrush should ask a shrewd man of the world to embrace Christianity, the man might well reply, “I now have troubles enough of my own already without being troubled

with such a doleful religion as yours is ;" and he would be right. A cheerful, sunny-faced piety, which rejoices in the Lord always, wins converts. What a joyous brace of prisoners were those two men who were locked down in Philippi's horrid dungeon at midnight ! They are singing down there until the old Bastile rings again. The other prisoners hear them. The Lord has put a new song into their mouths. Those apostolic Christians had their mouths filled with holy joy, and their tongues with singing.

The best days of the Church have always been its singing days. Luther set all Germany to chanting the "Ein feste burg," and the priests found that unless they could stop the contagion of holy song, the Reformation would spread like a fire in a stubble-field. John Wesley was a master-builder ; but the walls of Methodism never would have gone up so rapidly if they had not been built to Charles Wesley's music. That one hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul," gave the pitch to a thousand praise-meetings. In dear old Scotland Messrs. Moody and Sankey worked in partnership. The one preached the glorious Gospel ; the other sang it. Edinburgh is becoming filled with "singing bands." They are the outcome of revival joys. When a soul is

filled with the joy of the Lord, the voice of song becomes as natural as it is with a group of happy children to shout for glee. Heaven is full of seraphic song, because heaven is alive with seraphic bliss. And he who has Jesus and His grace more abundantly in his soul, "will break forth into singing." We even read in the prophet Zephaniah that the Lord God rejoices over Zion "with singing" !

Now here are three marks of the more abundant life in Christ. One of them is the healthy vigour that sloughs off disease and impurities, and makes a Christian strong in the Lord. The second is a stalwart faith. The third is peace of mind and joy in the Holy Ghost. All these are within the reach of every one who will strive after an abounding love in Jesus. He who asks receives ; he who seeks shall find ; he who knocks shall be admitted to this full fellowship with Christ.

THE SOUL'S EAGLE-FLIGHT.

“**T**HEY that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.” There is a ring in this passage like the blast of a bugle. He makes a very great mistake who supposes that the word “wait” implies an indolent passivity. The Hebrew word has brawn and bone in it; its signification is primarily *to be strong*—strong enough to hold out under pressure. Thence the word came to signify patience as the opposite of discouragement and peevishness. When a soul is ready to do God’s will, and to submit cheerfully to God’s discipline, and to receive such fulness of supply as God is willing to bestow, that soul may be truly said to “wait on the Lord.” It is a great grace, and it leads to a great glory.

The man who thus waits on God renews his strength. He does more; he receives a wonderful *inspiration*. He “shall mount up with wings

as an eagle." Naturalists tell us that the special power of the eagle is in his wings. He can fly in the teeth of a gale, and go out on long voyagings towards the clouds, and play the aeronaut for hours without weariness. His "conversation is in the heavens." The sparrow twitters from the housetop, the dove is content to abide in the forest; but eagles are children of the skies and playmates of the storm. Even their nests are on the mountain crags.

So God means that every soul which waits on Him shall sometimes soar. Not creep or grovel in the muck of worldiness, or crouch in bondage to man or devils, but rise above all these baser things into the atmosphere of heaven. When a soul binds itself to God it finds wings. Such an one has a citizenship in the skies. He catches inspiration from the indwelling Spirit. He rises above the chilling fogs of doubt, gains a wide outlook, is filled with ennobling thoughts, and actually feels that he is an heir to a celestial inheritance. He *outflies* the petty vexations that worry the worldling, and the grovelling lusts that drag the selfish and sensual soul down into the mire. His soul-life is hid with Christ in God. What to him, in such holy hours, are the fear of man, or the greed of



gold, or the thirst for applause, or the sting of poverty, or the apprehension of death? Why should he chafe or fret his spirit with the petty anxieties that worry poor creatures who live without God and without hope? What cares the eagle, as he bathes his wings in the translucent gold of the sunbeam, for all the turmoil, the smoke, the clouds, or even the lightnings that play far beneath him? He flies in company with the unclouded sun. So a heaven-bound soul, filled with the joys of the Holy Spirit, flies in company with God.

Brother in Christ Jesus! you may realize these happy experiences, if you will but wait on Him, if you will but knit your soul to Jesus. You will be surprised to find what an uplift there is in your religion. You will discover how it can carry you above base and sensual desires; how it can give birth to pure and holy meditations; how it can kindle joy in seasons of dark adversities and bereavements; how it can keep your hope as serene and shining as the morning star. Strive after this, by living less on self and more on Jesus. Live more like a son of God or a daughter of God, with the full feeling of adoption. Set your affections on things above. Don't count these perishable things to be your treasures. Seek better

ones in heaven. So shall prayer, and Bible-study, and the daily victory over sin, and the doing of God's will, renew your strength. You will mount up with wings as eagles until you grow heavenly-minded—"which is life and peace." This is the "higher life" to which Christ calls every believer. And when you and I are inclined to nestle down in indolence and self-indulgence, God "stirs up our nest" and bids us fly towards Him.

GOD'S SINGERS.

THE robins are about. We saw one this morning. He was as welcome a messenger as the dove that flew back to Noah to tell him that the waters were abated from off the face of the earth. This robin's message is: "The winter is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come." Within the next thirty days the first choir will be rehearsing in all the forests and the orchards. We prisoners in the city shall not hear much of the music, for our birds are mostly those quiet little quakers, the sparrows, who dress in plain grey and cultivate silence in their meetings. But the country-folk will have concerts finer than Nilsson's or Kellogg's without paying a copper for a ticket.

Singing plays a great part in God's Word and in God's world. Just turn over your concordance, and see in how many passages the word occurs. The first song we read of was that jubilant anthem

which rang out over the Red Sea when Moses and the children "sang a song unto the Lord." Was there no singing ever known before? There must have been. Jubal must have accompanied his harp with the voice. When Laban scolded Jacob for stealing away so slyly, he told him that he would have cheered his going "with songs and tabret and harp." Perhaps Noah's family relieved their loneliness in the ark by some lively household music. Nay, mother Eve may have crooned a lullaby over her first baby. The highest period of Jewish glory was the highest era of song. Her greatest king was the king of singers. "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live," exclaims the royal Psalmist. Our Divine Lord and His disciples certainly sang one hymn together; and it is likely that they often mingled their voices in the grand old Hebrew melodies. Even the mighty God is described in the book of Zephaniah as rejoicing over Zion "with singing."

What an exquisite touch that is in ancient Job where a "widow's heart is made to sing for joy." So Paul and Silas felt such inward gratitude and joy that even at midnight in their noxious and filthy dungeon they pealed out God's praises. Blessing on the triumphant grace that giveth songs

in the night ! When a soul is filled with the love of Jesus, the voice of praise is irrepressible. Martyrs' cells, and beds of anguish, and hovels of bitterest poverty have all been cheered with holy song. During the late war, the suffering soldiers in the hospital used to ease their pains by singing "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," and "There'll be no sorrow there."

It is related of a Christian officer at the battle of Shiloh, that he lay all night on the field, fatally wounded in both thighs. He said, "The stars shone out clear over all the dark battle-field, and I began to think about that great God who had given His Son to die for me, and that He was up above those glorious stars. I felt that I ought to praise Him, even while wounded and on that battle-ground. I could not help singing that beautiful hymn, 'When I can read my title clear.' There was a Christian brother in the brush near me. I could not see him, but I could hear him. He took up the strain. Another beyond him heard it and joined in, and still others too. We made the field of battle ring with the hymns of praise to God."

Here is a beautiful thought for all the followers of King Jesus. Life is a battle, with many a sharp

encounter, many an agonizing wound, many a hard bivouac. But we can "make it ring" with the voice of serene and triumphant praise. We do not sing enough. Our hearts should oftener warm with the mercies and promises and loving-kindnesses of our God, until the lips break forth into singing. Earth is the believer's antechamber to heaven. Whatever else the redeemed may do in our Father's house, we know that they sing there the new song of Moses and the Lamb. Heaven is vocal with God's singers. Those anthems are born of a love that cannot keep silent. And the purest and most perennial fountain of song on earth is a soul filled full with the presence of the Lord Jesus. Every forgiven, redeemed, heaven-bound heart should be a robin singing in the branches of the tree of life. While yonder bird's mouth is filled with music, he does no harm, even to a worm. And we verily believe that those hours in life in which we do the least sinning are those we spend in singing to our God.

*A GOLDEN MOTTO FOR EVERY
CHRISTIAN.*

THE old Bible truths are the freshest, after all. They have a perennial grandeur, like the Alps, at every new view of them ; they have a perennial sweetness, like that honey which is set before you every morning on your Swiss mountain rambles. Many of these truths are condensed into portable mottoes that may be carried in every man's memory. I find one of these golden watchwords in the twelfth chapter of Isaiah : “ *I will trust.* ”

No word is interwoven more closely in the warp and woof of the Old Testament than this word “ trust.” It is connected with the name of God no less than eighty-six times. In the New Testament the Greek verb which corresponds to it is “ believe,” and the Greek noun which corresponds to it is “ faith.” These vital words occur more than a hundred times. There is no duty commended so often in God's Word as the duty of trusting ; with

none are linked more exceeding great and precious promises.

This act of faith lies at the very threshold of the Christian life. When the penitent inquirer cries out, What shall I do to be saved? the one invariable answer is, Trust on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. The seeker's first duty is to renounce his own sins and to trust the efficacy of Christ's blood to cleanse him, and to renounce his own strength, which is weakness, and to trust himself to the mighty arm of Jesus. I received a touching letter this week from one of the most wretched and apparently hopeless inebriates that I have ever known. He had fairly wallowed in drunkenness. He writes to me: "When I had become almost a wreck, both physically and mentally, and friends had pronounced my case hopeless, then it was that Jesus came to my rescue, and I gave Him my heart. *That saved me.*" This man has been for six months living sober and cleanly and happy. When drowning in his shocking sin and shame he had made his last clutch on the outstretched arm of Jesus, and this trust brought him Divine help. He might well close his humble and grateful note by saying, "If you have any one in your congregation who is addicted to the use of

intoxicants, please say to him for me that nothing but the grace of God can save him." This reformed man will be safe just as long as his watchword is, I will trust! The scientific sceptic laughs at the bare idea of such a Divine interference with the physical phenomena of appetite and using strong drink; but will the sceptic please to account for the stubborn *fact* of my friend's conversion?

As trust in the sinner's Saviour lies at the starting-point of Christianity, so it is the keynote of the whole after Christian experience. The Christian life is a life of trust. As faith plays such an important part in human affairs, from the babe who takes just what its mother gives it, on to the full-grown man who takes for his daily toil the Government's paper promises as money, so faith is the central idea of our holy religion. The labouring man never saw "the Government;" but he knows that behind it lie all the vast resources of the Great Republic. The believer never saw his God; but he knows that in Him are the resources of infinite wisdom, and wealth, and power, and love. So he wisely says, I will trust!

This motto holds good for every decision we have to make, and for every duty we have to perform: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also

in him, and he will bring it to pass." This means what it says: give the Lord the direction of your steps. Paul, when he felt drawn to Rome as a witness for Jesus, did not trouble himself whether he went there as a passenger or a prisoner in chains. This trust must be a continuous process—the daily habit of our lives. When the Lord is driving us, we must not be all the time grasping the reins. The tourist who goes up the Matterhorn must not tell the guide the route, or what implements it is safe to carry. If he is not willing to trust his guide, he had better stay at the base of the mountain. For there will come many an emergency in which nothing but that guide's steady brain and stout arm will lie between him and certain destruction. My brother climbers, before us rises the rugged up-hill of self-denial and of duty. At the summit are heaven's flashing glories. Can you grasp a stiff hold on the loving hand of your Guide, and say, even on the dizziest places, *I will trust?*

Remember that for what you entrust to God you and I are not responsible. What we leave to Him belongs to Him. He is our Trustee. It is His "look-out" whether we fail or succeed. Paul was not responsible for the number of converts at Athens and Rome, nor whether there should be one

solitary convert to the truth. He had but to preach faithfully and to live righteously, and leave results with his Master. All that I am responsible for is the honest employment of my faculties and my opportunities. God must look out for the rest. The Bible that lays on my pulpit bears the motto, "I will trust."

When four rowers are in a boat, with their backs toward the bow, their simple office is to pull the oars. The steersman's office is to look ahead and work the helm. The moment that the rower turns steersman, and tries to look over his shoulder, or outpull his fellow-oarsman, the boat loses headway. So you and I are placed with our backs to the future. In our hands are the oars of Christian endeavour. Let God steer the boat, and let us attend to the oars. The sweetest thought to every true believer is this: my Master is at the helm. He knoweth the way that I take. My times are in His hand. It is not in me to direct my steps. His grace is sufficient for me. I will trust.

Here is a golden motto for the walls of our prayer-rooms. The first duty when we come to the mercy-seat is to believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. We must not always expect immediate answers; nor always just such answers as we most desire.

Lodge your prayer in the bosom of Jesus, and then go away composedly, saying to yourself, "I will trust." How many a poor, troubled Christian comes to the prayer-meeting with a perfect back-load of cares, and fears, and desires, and worries, and then carries them all away again ! He has not learned to cast his cares on God. If he comes to Jesus, it is very much in the same temper that the disciples did when they shook up their sleeping Master in the storm, and cried, "Carest thou not, Lord, that we perish ?" His answer to such panic-stricken followers is, "O ye of little faith ; wherefore do ye doubt ? "

There is another place to hang up this golden motto : it is on the walls of a sick chamber. Friend, let me put it up at the foot of thy bed, in full view of thine eyes when thou wakest : "I will trust." Look at it ; no medicine can do thee so much good. Feed on it ; there is strength in it and marrow to thy bones. If you are restless, put it under your pillow and go to sleep on it. Get some one to read to you the fourteenth chapter of John. It will help you to get well ; and if you are not to recover, it will help you to get ready to leave your bed and go into the open door of your Father's house in glory.

In the abode of poverty, this is a welcome text to write up on the scanty walls. It will shine there like a lamp. When the barrel runs low and the cruse is getting empty, then is the time to trust. If God has given His dear son to die for your soul, do not think it presumptuous to trust Him for your daily bread. This text will breed patience and cheerfulness. Nail it to the wall.

And so for every emergency in life here is a watchword for every Christian. When temptation assails, trust. What time you are afraid, trust. My daily life is a march into an unknown future, and I cannot see an arm's length ahead.

So I go onward, not knowing ;
I would not if I might ;
I would rather walk in the dark with God
Than walk alone in the light ;
I would rather walk with Him by faith
Than walk alone by sight.

THE HANDS OF CHRIST.

OUR Divine Jesus becomes vastly nearer to us and dearer, too, when we think of Him as a fellow-man. He was made like unto His brethren. This is the great mystery of godliness : but none the less true because it is too deep for our fathom-lines. He became actual flesh and blood, and His baby-lips drew milk from a mother's breast. His feet trod the rough roads of Galilee, and His weary head was laid on the hard plank of the fishing-boat when he dropped asleep. His eyes looked upon guilty Jerusalem until the tears came, and looked upon guilty Peter, too, until His tears came. His hands were ever busy, from the time when they handled the axe and saw in Nazareth until they were pierced with the ragged nails on Calvary. Of these hands we read very often, and there are some precious lessons which they hold out to all His disciples to the end of time.

i. They were working hands. In the Songs of

Solomon they are poetically described as like “gold rings set with the beryl ;” but they were actually the roughened hands which drove the chisel and swung the axe. What a Divine dignity our Lord puts upon honest toil ; and what a silent, stinging rebuke upon the upstart insolence which counts manual labour a degradation. In all God’s universe there is no room for the moral monster, an idle man. “ My Father worketh hitherto and I work.” It was a steady industry with Jesus that accomplished in a short three years such an amount of travel and preaching and healing of the diseased. Of all he said and did only a small portion has been recorded. What a sweep of work those hands performed—from lifting a corpse into life and touching a leper into health down to the lowly office of washing the feet of eleven poor sinners.

2. A very beautiful office was performed by our Master when He took a group of children up into His arms, and “laid his hands upon them,” and blessed them. What virtue went out of that holy touch into those young hearts we cannot tell. We have often longed to know how those children turned out in after life, and what gifts that Divine benediction brought them. Tradition says that the brave martyr Ignatius was one of the little fellows

who sat on the lap of Jesus and felt the pressure of the Almighty hand. Precious Saviour! come in spirit, and lay Thy strong, gentle grasp of love on our dear boys and girls, and keep these our lambs from the fangs of the wolf. It is a grievous sin that we fathers and mothers do not with actual faith bring our children to Jesus, that He may lay upon them that mighty influence which alone can keep them from the devil's clutch. Either Jesus or Satan must have our children. Upon us parents too often hangs the deciding vote. A large portion of Christ's miracles of love were wrought at the urgent request of parents for their suffering children. Is that ear gone deaf to-day? Will He not do for our children's souls what He did for the bodies of the ruler's daughter and the dead youth at Nain?

3. What power too was there in the hold of Jesus' hands. One strong grasp lifts the sinking Peter out of the depths. So my dear Lord caught me when I was sinking toward hell by the gravitation of my own guilt. So has He often lifted me out of trouble when the waves were ready to strangle me. The tighter I clung the safer I felt. At the moment when I let my whole weight hang upon His arm the responsibility for my salvation passed up from me to the omnipotent Jesus. The

assurance of my ever reaching heaven hangs upon this golden promise: "None shall ever pluck them out of my hands." Observe that this does not say that I may never play the fool and wickedly slip away into abominable backsliding. It does not say that I may not pettishly push away that hand when it is correcting me, or strike it when it is giving me bitter medicine. It does mean that while I remain in Jesus' hands, true and humble and faithful to Him, all the devils of the pit cannot wrest me out of the grasp of love.

Lord ! I would clasp Thy hand in mine,
Nor ever murmur or repine ;
Content, whatever lot I see,
Since 'tis Thy hand that holdeth me.

There is one precious promise suggested just here which we often misquote. Our Lord's assurance is, "Behold ! I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." He does not say that our names only are written there. We are there—our persons, our case, our wants, our works, and everything that concerns us. Jesus has taken us into His hands. Can I forget what I have graven upon my palms? Neither can our Master forget us or forsake us. Where the hands go, I go. Nor will He lose His hold until He leads me to the everlasting fountains of water in glory.

4. Those hands which thus hold me were pierced for my redemption. The prints of the nails are there. Those wounded hands bore my guilt in the hour of atonement. Out of them flowed the atoning blood. He bids me "reach thither my fingers and behold that hand, and be not faithless but believing." It is the Jesus of Calvary that saves me. Nor does His work end with the sacrifice He made for us on the cross. Paul tells us in that magnificent eighth chapter to the Romans that "it is Christ that died—yea, is risen again; who is at the right hand of God and maketh *intercession* for us." There He stands as our Advocate. He lifts up His hands for us. He pleads our cause. Like the wounded Roman hero who came before the senate and held up the stumps of his arms in mute appeal for an imprisoned brother, and gained his suit, so our Elder Brother pleads for us with the pierced hands that bled on the cross.

These are a few of the thousand sweet and strengthening lessons which the hands of our Divine Redeemer bring to us. Let us kiss them with reverent love. Let us lay ourselves within them. Let us dismiss all coward fears and devilish doubts while "his left hand is under our heads and his right hand doth embrace us."

UPS AND DOWNS.

WE do not begrudge the ten long solid chapters in our Bible that are devoted mainly to the delightful biography of Joseph. They are probably the best-thumbed chapters by boys and girls in the whole Word; they ought to be carefully studied and pondered by every young man who is laying out his plans for life. No person in history, secular or sacred, ever experienced more of the *Ups* and *Downs* of life than he did. The contrast between Napoleon an artillery lieutenant, and Napoleon the dictator to Europe—the contrast between Lincoln on a Mississippi flatboat, and Lincoln in the presidential chair—is not sharper than between the Hebrew youth in the pit and in the prison, and that same Hebrew riding in the second chariot of Pharaoh's haughty empire.

The prison was really his training-school for the palace. He filled the humbler sphere so full with his integrity and his trustworthiness that he overflowed into the larger sphere of the premiership.

This is a most important truth for every young man who has any laudable ambition. Many a clerk complains that he does not get a better place or a bigger salary ; but he does not stop to think whether he has really *earned* a promotion. Many a restless minister chafes under the fancied humiliation of hiding his light under the bushel of some obscure parish. Good brother ! when your light grows big enough to burn up the bushel, there is no fear but what the people of a larger parish will discover the flame, and will promote it to their taller and more conspicuous candlestick. If the Presbyterians of Edinburgh had not observed a very bright light shining away off in the little hamlet of Arbirlot, they never would have called Dr. Guthrie to the fastidious capital of Scotland. The only legitimate way to get into a larger place is to overflow the smaller one. The egregious folly of many of the " strikers " last summer consisted in this, that if they could not get the bigger loaf they demanded, they would not touch the lesser loaf that was offered them, and very soon they had no loaf at all. There are thousands of just such fools in every department of life, who " strike " for something which they have not fairly earned, and discover at last that they have only struck themselves—*dead*.

Another capital lesson is taught us by that level-headed and godly young man who behaved equally well in a prison and in a palace. He understood the difference between *submitting* and *surrendering*. They are as far apart as the Arctic and the Antarctic. When Joseph was in a penitentiary through a heinous injustice he submitted to his hard lot gracefully. Instead of gnashing his teeth in impotent desperation, he just went about his daily tasks with a most cheerful temper. He must have been a streak of sunshine within those gloomy walls. He could submit to what was inevitable, but he never surrendered.

My brave brother A—— submits to a small parish and a stingy salary, but he does not give up and growl. In whatsoever place God puts him he has made up his mind to be content. My young friend Goodgold lost his situation when the bank that employed him failed, and left his little family on low rations. But Goodgold submitted to the humble position of a porter in a warehouse rather than to loaf about the streets sulking. He could go down but he would not "give up the ship." My excellent sister in Christ, Mrs. Sunnysoul, has lost her health, as well as most of her property. A visit to her sick room always tones up my faith in the

power of God's grace to give "songs in the night." She is perfectly submissive to her trying lot; but so far from surrendering her confidence and her crown, she is absolutely one of the happiest disciples I ever knew. Cast down, she is not destroyed; though sorrowful, she is always rejoicing. She can submit, but she never surrenders.

We very much doubt if it would be safe for us always to be "up" in the world. It is a wholesome process to be "taken down" occasionally. The grass in our gardens has a tendency to grow rank, and it requires to be taken down by a mower. The garden never looks so well as after the sharp cutter has gone over it. Many a true Christian never appears so attractive in his graces as when God's mowing-machine has gone over him. His self-confidence, or his growing love of the world, or his sinful ambitions, needed the scythe. Even Paul himself would not have grown up so thick and even, and strong from the roots, if he had not been mowed pretty often. The best trees in the orchard need trimming.

Sometimes we get up into a position that is dangerous to godliness, and then a "taking down" is a blessing. It is just a possible thing that the Lord saw what a dangerous place for Joseph that luxu-

rious house of Potiphar was ; so He took him down into a prison. I suspect that God discovered what peril Paul was in of becoming "exalted beyond measure ;" so He took him down with some thorn in the flesh that must have pricked the balloon of self-conceit. There is not a spiritual biography in all of Christ's universal Church, in all ages, but presents a constant alternation of *Ups* and *Downs*. When a Christian is carrying too many topsails, God is very apt to send a gale which strips off the canvas. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased" is as true of the Christian as it is of the worldling. But when a chastened soul lies very low before God, how sweet it is to hear Him whisper in the ear of faith, "Whoso humbleth himself shall be exalted" !

FEAR NOT; ONLY TRUST!

TOWARD the close of one of the busiest days which our Lord spent upon earth He was sitting at meat in the house of His disciple Matthew. The crowd of Capernaumites, who had awaited His landing from the opposite shore of the lake, had followed up to Matthew's house, and seem to have lingered about the doors while He was at dinner. Presently a ruler of the synagogue enters the dining-room in great distress, and, throwing himself down at Jesus' feet, sobs out the words: "Come right to my house. My daughter is dying."

Sorrow sent him to Jesus. It is very probable that more than one who reads these lines was first led to Him from the same motive. It required just that shock to your slumbering heart to arouse you, and to make you feel your need of a Divine Friend. The best office which severe trouble can perform for us is to send us to Jesus. Blessed be that blow which startles us into calling on Christ.

The Master rises from the table instantly, and accompanies Jairus toward his dwelling. There is a touch of pathos in the word "only." The dying child is an only daughter. The one light of his home is flickering in the socket. That one precious life hangs entirely upon a word from that mysterious Rabbi, whom he is following along with anxious heart. Presently the crowd halts. Jesus has felt a touch upon the fringe of His robe, as it laid over His shoulder. It was not the bottom of His robe that was grasped by some one bowing to the ground amid the jostling throng. But, slipping up slyly behind Him, a wretched woman, half-dead with a loathsome hæmorrhage, had just touched the sacred tassel or fringe that hung upon Christ's shoulder. "Who touched me?" Quick-spoken Peter half rebukes Him by telling Him that the whole crowd are surging up against Him, and the question is preposterous. The eye of Jesus soon falls upon the poor woman whose faith has just stolen a blessing. She drops at His feet, and confesses that her trust in His power was so great, that she only touched His robe in order to be cured.

In the meantime Jairus is standing still and waiting for the conversation to be ended. It may be that his fatherly anxiety was getting very impa-

tient. But it was a happy halt for him. He witnessed the miracle of healing. He heard the sweet words spoken to the frightened woman : “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. Go in peace.” Here was a lesson to strengthen his own faith. There is a lesson for us too in that incident of our Lord’s stopping on His way to perform one good deed in order to perform another act of love. Many Christians are so wrapped up in one or two favourite schemes of benevolence, which become their “hobbies,” that they have no time or thought for cases of suffering close by them.

Jesus was never idle, neither was He ever in a hurry. He could afford to let that dying girl breathe her last, while He halted to do a kindness to the sad woman who had been bleeding for twelve years.

Up comes a messenger with fatal tidings. He brings the hard fact to Jairus : “Thy daughter is dead.” And then he adds the unfeeling advice, “Don’t *bother* the Master.” This homely English word expresses exactly what the cast-iron man said to the broken-hearted father. There are just such people in the world now. They smite you with bad news as with a javelin, and then follow the blow with the hackneyed stoicism, “There’s no use

in worrying over it." The child was dead. Why need the poor father ask Jesus to go another step?

Just at this point comes in that coincidence between the trouble of Jairus and the spiritual troubles that beset our souls oft and again. Here comes in the coincidence between that father's utter helplessness and distress and those very same feelings in the breast of many an anxious seeker for salvation. The soul is tormented with a sense of guilt, and feels utterly helpless to relieve itself. The hard fact of guilt and weakness and liability to perish stares him in the face. Unbelief croaks in his ear, "Why bother yourself any longer about religion? Why worry God with bootless prayers?"

And here, too, come in those wonderful words of our dear Master, which have rung like a heavenly bell in the ears of so many a troubled, anxious sinner. I am thankful that the messenger blurted out that blunt message to Jairus. For our Lord overheard it, and pronounced those precious words to the sorrowing father: "*Fear not; only trust!*" It is a pity that our version does not translate the Greek word into the better word "trust," instead of the more vague one "believe." What Jesus bade that father do was to trust the dead darling to Him, and "she shall be made whole." We

can imagine the ruler as walking the rest of the way with steady step and quiet tongue. Fear may have whispered, "What if He cannot do it? It is too good to be true." But faith replies: "All things are possible with Him. He has just cured a woman's twelve years' sickness in an instant." So he goes calmly along to the house of death, and calmly up into the chamber where the little corpse is lying. And when Jesus touches the dead hand and exclaims, "*Talitha cumi!*!" behold! his faith is swallowed up in sight!

This is a wonderful scene, and one of the most inspiring, instructive, and comforting in the whole book of Divine love. Those words spoken by Christ to Jairus have been a golden counsel to millions of inquiring souls, and a golden comfort to millions of afflicted saints. Fear not; only trust! The one brings torment; the other brings peace. Doubt always disquiets. Trust calms the troubled heart as Christ's omnipotent voice calmed Galilee's tempest into smooth unruffled silence. Doubt cripples all exertion. A doubting inquirer is not ready either to pray as he ought or to obey as he ought. Faith prompts to pray for help, and then to do what Jesus bids. Doubt dishonours Christ; insults Him. Trust takes Him at His word, and

believes that He can save a soul already dead in trespasses and sin. "I found I had nothing *to do but trust* Him," said an intelligent convert to her pastor, after many weeks of distress had ended in serene peace. And these words, "Fear not ; only trust !" were the manna which we gave to a dying friend last week. He said that they prepared him to feel "safe in the arms of Jesus."

Kind reader, you and I have some hard climbing to do before we reach the top. We must imitate Alpine climbers, and keep strong hold of the guide. Let us take short views. If we look over the precipices, we shall grow dizzy. If we look *too* far ahead, we shall grow discouraged. Let us rather put our weak hands into Christ's strong, loving grasp, and all the time listen to His cheering words : "*Fear not ; only TRUST !*"

THE EVERLASTING ARMS.

ONE of the sweetest passages in the Bible is this one—"Underneath are the everlasting arms." It is not often preached from; perhaps because it is felt to be so much richer and more touching than anything we ministers can say about it. But what a vivid idea it gives of the Divine support! The first idea of infancy is of resting in arms which maternal love never allows to become weary. Sick-room experiences confirm the impression, when we have seen a feeble mother or sister lifted from the bed of pain by the stronger ones of the household. In the case of our heavenly Father the arms are felt, but not seen. The invisible, secret support comes to the soul in its hours of weakness or trouble; for God knoweth our feebleness; He remembers that we are but dust.

We often sink very low under the weight of sorrows. Sudden disappointments can carry us in an

hour from the heights down to the very depths. Props that we leaned upon are stricken away. What God means by it very often is just to bring us down to "the everlasting arms"! We did not feel our need of them before. We were "making flesh our arm," and relying on human comforts or resources. When my little boy dashes off to his play, brimful of glee, he does not stop to think much about his parents; but let him be taken suddenly sick, or an accident befall him, his first thought is to go to his mother. God often lays His hand heavily upon us, to remind us that we have got a FATHER. When my neighbour A— broke in business, and twenty-four hours made him a bankrupt, he came home, saying to himself, "Well, my money is gone, but Jesus is left." He did not merely come down to "hardpan;" he came to something far more solid—to the everlasting arms. When another friend laid her beautiful boy in his coffin, after the scarlet fever had done its worst, she laid her own sorrowful heart upon the everlasting arms. The dear little sleeper was there already. The Shepherd had His lamb.

There is something about deep sorrow that tends to wake up the *child-feeling* in all of us. A man of giant intellect becomes like a little child when

a great grief smites him, or when a grave opens beneath his bedroom or his fireside. I have seen a stout sailor—who laughed at the tempest—come home when he was sick, and let his old mother nurse him as if he were a little baby. He was willing to lean on the arms that had never failed him. So a Christian in the time of trouble is brought to his child-feeling. He wants to lean somewhere, to talk to somebody, to have somebody love him and hold him up. His extremity becomes God's opportunity. Then his humbled, broken spirit cries out,

O Lord ! a little helpless child
Comes to Thee this day for rest ;
Take me, fold me in Thy arms,
Hold my head upon Thy breast.

One great purpose in all affliction is to bring us down to the everlasting arms. What new strength and peace it gives us to feel them underneath us. We know that, far as we may have sunk, we cannot go any farther. Those mighty arms can not only hold us, they can lift us up. They can carry us along. Faith, in its essence, is simply a resting on the everlasting arms. It is trusting them, and not our own weakness. The sublime act of Jesus as our Redeemer was to descend to

the lowest depths of human depravity and guilt, and to bring up His redeemed ones from that horrible pit in His loving arms. Faith is just the clinging to those arms, and nothing more.

This first lesson in conversion is to be practised and repeated all through the subsequent Christian life. To endeavour to lift our own souls by our own strength, is as absurd as to attempt to lift our bodies by grasping hold of our own clothes. The lift must come from God. Faith cries out, "Oh, my Lord, thou hast a mighty arm ; hold me up !" The response from heaven is, "I have found thee ; Mine arm shall strengthen thee ; on My arm shalt thou trust."

Here lies the very core of the doctrine of "Assurance." It simply means that I can feel, and every Christian believer can feel, perfectly sure that the everlasting arms will never break, and never fail us. I am *not* so sure that in some moment of waywardness, or pride, or self-sufficiency, I may not forsake those arms, and trust to my own wretched weakness. Then the curse which God has pronounced on those who depart from Him and "make flesh their arm" is certain to come upon me. I learn from bitter experience what a pitiable object even a Christian can be, when he has forsaken the living

fountain, and has nothing left but his own broken cistern. God's Word is full of precious encouragement to faith ; but it contains terrible warnings to presumption and self-confidence. And while presumption is swinging on its spider's web over the perilous precipice, faith calmly says—

All my trust on THEE is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring.

While unbelief is floundering through the darkness, or sinking in the waves of despair, faith triumphantly sings—

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
Here by His love o'ershadowed
Sweetly my soul doth rest.

This is the theology for times of temptation. Such times are sure to come. They are the testing processes. A late Sunday's equinoctial gale tested every tree in the forest ; only the rotten ones came down. When we read or hear how some professed Christian has turned defaulter, or lapsed into drunkenness, or slipped from the communion-table into open disgrace, it simply means that a human arm has broken. The man had forsaken the everlasting arms. David did it once, and fell. Daniel

did not do it, and he stood. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver *the godly* out of temptations."

This is a precious theology—this theology of trust—for the sick room. We called in this week to visit one of Christ's suffering flock. We talked for a time about the ordinary consolations for such cases as hers. Presently we said, "There is a sweet text that has been running in our mind for days past; it is this, '*Underneath are the everlasting arms.*'" The tears came in a moment. That precious passage went to the right spot. It did good like a medicine. And our suffering friend laid more comfortably on that bed of pain from feeling that underneath her were the everlasting arms. Reader! may they be under thy head in the dying hour!

A LIFT FOR THE OVERLOADED.

THIS world is full of overloaded people. Some are oppressed with pecuniary anxieties ; their incomes have fallen below their outgoings, or their investments have taken to themselves wings. Some are burdened with solicitude for loved ones who are sick, and still more with painful griefs over the wayward and the wandering. A grievous burden of spiritual despondency weighs down another ; and still another is intensely anxious for the unconverted of his parish, or his Sunday-school class. God only knoweth how many of His children are overloaded, and what manner of loads they are carrying. Each one thinks his burden is the biggest. "Don't talk to me about your troubles," says the poor brother to the rich one. "You never know what it is to be without a dollar to pay your rent, or to foot the bill of your sick wife's physician and medicines." "Ah," replies the other, "I could bear poverty if I only had my health again,"—or,

“I could endure anything if my poor wandering boy were restored to me and to my Saviour.” And so each troubled man or woman goes on, unburdening his mind to some other, without getting one atom of relief.

Why, in the name of common sense and Christianity, do they not really unburthen themselves in very deed, by rolling off the crushing load? Where? On whom? Here is the answer, in this golden line, “Cast thy burthen upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee.” There is a twin-passage to this in the New Testament, which is, if possible, still more precious. Peter wrote it, but the Holy Spirit gave it to him. “Casting all your care upon Him, for he careth for you.”

The word “care” in this passage does not describe a wise forethought for the future, or the proper solicitudes of affection. The Greek word signifies anxiety. It is about equivalent to our homely word “worry.” Roll your load of worries over upon God! The reason given is exceedingly touching. “For He takes an interest in you.” There is a still sweeter translation of this line. It is this, “For He has you on his heart.” Beautiful thought—blessed thought! The infinite God of the universe has poor frail diminutive me upon His

heart ! My big load is less than a feather's weight to Him. He can carry it and me besides, and a myriad more such weaklings also. Like as a father pitith His children, so the Lord pitith them that fear Him. He remembers that we are but dust.

We are playing with our little three-year-old on the sea-beach, and the young naturalist has crammed his pockets and filled his apron with shells and sea-washed stones. We offer to take them ; but the youngster is afraid to lose them, and insists on hugging the load. By-and-by he gives in, and we just shoulder him up, and while his head lies sleeping on our neck, we slip our treasures into our pockets. His first cry when he wakes is, "Papa, I have lost all my pretty shells!" "No, my boy ! the load was too heavy for you. It tired you out. Here are your shells and the bright stones. Papa has kept them all for you." That boy has got one of his first lessons in faith.

Now just what I do for my wee weakling who cannot carry his load, my blessed heavenly Father offers to do for me. He says to me, "Give me your burden." The Almighty Ruler of the universe, who is wise in counsel and wonderful in working ; the God who piloted Noah and all his precious freight ; who sent His messenger-birds to

Elijah by the brookside ; who quieted Daniel among the ravening beasts, and calmed Paul in the raging storm, He says to me, "Roll your anxieties over to me. I have you on my heart." But practically our answer to this loving offer of our God is, "No ! we won't trust it to any one. It is our own trouble; nobody can carry it but ourselves." What fools !

Just imagine a weary footsore traveller, tugging along with his pack on a hot summer day. A wagon comes up, and the kind-hearted owner calls out, "Friend ! you look tired. Toss that pack into my wagon. I am going your way." But the wayfarer, eyeing him suspiciously, mutters to himself, "He wants to steal it ;" or else obstinately replies, "I am obliged to you, sir ; but I can carry my own luggage." We laugh at the preposterous folly of this obstinate fellow, and then repeat the same insane sin against our loving Lord. Oh, fools, and slow of heart to believe !

For this is just the clearest exercise of faith. When God says to us, "Give Me your load, trust Me ; what you cannot do I will do for you," He puts our faith to one of the strongest tests. He never consents to carry our burdens unless we give them to Him. Jesus never agrees to bear the

sinner's sins until the sinner has repented, and has accepted Him gladly as the burden-bearer. God's offer is to lighten our load by putting Himself, as it were, into our hearts, and under the load. He then becomes our strength—a strength equal to the day. This is a supernatural work. This is what is meant by "grace sufficient." This is the result of an indwelling Christ. He puts His right arm beneath us.

This blessed trust brings inward quietness. The more entirely and simply and implicitly we trust, the more we rest. As the baby drops over upon mother's bosom into sweet repose, so God giveth His beloved sleep. Not sleep from work, but sleep from worry.

Work is strengthening ; but worry frets and fevers us. It chafes our devotions. Like to ague-fever it consumes our strength. Paul, the giant worker, who laid the foundation of Christ's kingdom from Jerusalem to Rome, and who had "the care of all the churches" in his loving heart, never seems to have chafed himself with a moment's worry. He warned sinners night and day with tears, but they were such tears of pity as Jesus shed. "Be anxious for nothing, brethren!" was his calm counsel to the comrades of his glorious



struggle. He was doing God's work, and he knew that God would take care of him until that work was finished. He knew WHOM he had believed, and whom he was serving, and cared not whether duty led him to a palace or a prison. He evidently held that doubt and vexation and worry are sins, and are as thoroughly to be resisted as any other temptation of the devil.

And now, if my blessed Master has my poor work—my parish, my household, or my Sabbath class—upon His Divine heart, why should I worry? If Christ is at the helm, why should I be running about the deck in distress, lest the vessel sink? If God lets you and me labour for Him in vain, it is His loss more than ours. Duty belongs to us; results belong to Him. Then let us work—and wait—and trust—and leave our loads with Jesus.

The Princess Elizabeth of England was found dead with her head resting on her Bible open at these words, "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." So may we fall asleep at last when the day's work for Jesus is over, and wake up in heaven, to find ourselves in the delicious rest that remaineth for the people of God!

GOD'S KINDNESS TO THE CRIPPLED.

ONE of the most tender and attractive episodes in the career of David the king is found in the ninth chapter of the second historic book of Samuel. The incident is beautiful in itself, and it illustrates several spiritual truths like a parable.

David is fairly established on the throne and under a warm sunshine of prosperity. The Ark has been brought home to the royal city. The ruddy shepherd-boy of Bethlehem has waxed strong. He is reigning over all Israel, and executing justice among all his people. But one day, while thinking of his beloved comrade of former times, he inquires whether any of the house of Saul is yet living, for he wishes to show him kindness for *Jonathan's sake*. Ishbosheth, the weak pretender to the throne, had been put out of the way, and it seems doubtful if a single survivor of the hateful dynasty of Saul yet remains. But an old family steward named Ziba, when called into

the royal presence, reports that there is a son of Jonathan yet living, who is "lame on his feet." This is about the only fact known of the poor waif of dethroned royalty. He is a cripple. Ever since his nurse had fled from the house at the tidings of Jonathan's bloody death, and had dropped the little five-year-old in her panic, he had been incurably lame on both his feet. And so he had been sheltered as a sort of "Tiny Tim" in the house of one Machir, beyond the river Jordan. It was not far from the spot where the revolt of Ishbosheth had been ended by the assassin's knife. The region had swarmed with sedition.

As soon as David learns that a child of his bosom friend is yet in the land of the living, he remembers that he had once made a covenant with Jonathan to "show the kindness of the Lord" to his house for ever. The only reparation he can make for his long forgetfulness is to send the royal chariot speedily to Lodebar, with orders to bring Mephibosheth up to court. As the poor abashed cripple hobbles into the king's presence-chamber he is perfectly overwhelmed. He falls on his face and exclaims: "What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?" Mephibosheth was probably a shy and gentle

creature, like many others who suffer from bodily infirmity ; but there is nothing which so soon lays one flat on the face as a volley of unexpected kindness. No artillery kills an enemy like love. If Mephibosheth had been taught to regard David as the destroyer of the dynasty of Saul, all his prejudice must have melted at once when the monarch receives him so graciously. Not only receives him, but adopts him, "for Jonathan's sake," into the royal household ! He sits at the king's board every day, and "finds a royal table a good hiding-place for lame legs." In that wild age of war and violence, when revenge was too often accounted a virtue, this little cabinet picture of the poor cripple seated at the imperial banquets has all the lineaments of the New Testament Gospel in it. In fact, as our readers have followed the story through, they must have recognised the most striking features of the Divine mercy to crippled souls.

Every sinner lives in a rebellious region, further away from God than Lodebar was from Hebron. Every one of us was lamed by a fall, and impotent to restore ourselves. I was a moral Mephibosheth, and so is every one while under that "estate of sin and misery into which man fell." Our whole

nature corrupted by our forefather's sin, and the actual transgressions superadded by ourselves, made us "lame of both feet." It was a sorry picture of himself which Mephibosheth drew when he styled himself "a dead dog;" but many an awakened sinner has had the same estimate of his own unworthiness. Rutherford describes himself, in the same impassioned language, as having once been "a dead carcase, not able to step over a straw." Bunyan used equally strong expressions of self-abhorrence; and those who have ever read Charles G. Finney's "Autobiography" will mark how intensely he felt his guilt before God. I do not believe that any man can fully appreciate the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, and the precious timeliness of atoning love to himself, until he was thoroughly "broken down" in penitent self-abasement. The strongest men and women in God's host have once been repentant cripples, confessing not the misfortune of an inherited weakness, but their own personal iniquity and shameful sins against a holy God.

There is a fine parallel between David's embassy of kindness to bring up Mephibosheth to Hebron and the mission of Christ's Gospel to crippled humanity in its exile. That royal chariot halting

before the cripple's door, and ready to carry him up to the king, is a capital figure of God's mercy that stops at the sinner's doorway. Grace furnishes and mans the chariot. Grace sent "the only-begotten Son into the world, that whosoever trusteth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This home-bringing of the lame exile to the palace reminds one of that scene where the father welcomes home the wanderer from the far country, and kills the fatted calf for him, and clothes him in the best robe.

This reception of a repentant soul is all for Jesus's sake ; even as Mephibosheth was welcomed "for Jonathan's sake." Christ's sufferings and intercessions are at the bottom of every sinner's salvation. Paul leaves no doubt on this point when he says : "God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you." When we get admission to the marriage supper in our Father's house, our song will be to the praise of Him who came to seek and to save the lost. What a family of restored cripples there will be at that supper of the King !

Our friend, Mr. Moody, in one of his racy paraphrases of this story of Mephibosheth, says : "Some people think that, like certain low-spirited Christians, Mephibosheth, after he went to live

with David, must have been all the time worrying over his lame feet. I don't think so. If David didn't mind the lameness, it was all right. So I think that when he dined with the royal family, among all the great lords and ladies, he just stuck his club-feet under the table and *looked the king right in the face.*" This is a happy thought and happily put; but to me it is far happier still to know that when Divine grace saved me it cured the wretched lameness, and enabled me to "walk and to leap and to praise God."

THE FOUR ANCHORS.

PAUL'S voyage to Rome is one of those graphic episodes in the Word of God which never loses its interest. It not merely throws a strong light upon ancient navigation, but it affords a strong confirmation of the truthfulness of Luke's "Book of the Acts of the Apostles." Modern nautical surveys and soundings establish every word that Luke has written. But the narrative is susceptible of rich spiritual instruction. The perils of the voyage of life and the divinely-appointed methods of deliverance are strikingly illustrated. Especially is there a wealth of practical teaching in the twenty-ninth verse of chapter xxvii., which tells us how the mariners in the tempest-tossed ship "cast *four anchors* out of the stern and wished for the day."

Some shallow critics have jeered at the idea of anchoring a vessel from the stern. But an ancient painting on the walls of Herculaneum depicts a galley anchored in that manner. Modern mariners

in the Mediterranean pursue the same practice. It is said that Lord Nelson got the idea of anchoring his fleet from the stern in the battle of Copenhagen from reading the twenty-seventh chapter of the Acts. Certainly the endangered crew had a better chance of safety if the dawning of the day found them already headed toward the shore. What a long night must that have been to the drenched and weary voyagers, while they listened to the thunder of the breakers ! Paul, the prisoner, is the real master of the situation and the coolest head on board. His precious life is ensured from heaven, for every good man "is immortal until his work is finished." It was a part of the providential plan that those anchors should preserve the most valuable life on the globe until Paul's mighty mission was accomplished.

But what are the four anchors which we voyagers to eternity must use when overtaken by the Euroclydons of temptation and trial? The first and foremost one is *Faith*. This is the soul's sure trust in an unseen God. Looking at a vessel around whose bows the billows are foaming, we may wonder what holds her so steady in the teeth of the gale ; for we do not see the stubborn anchor which, many fathoms down, is grappling with its flukes into

the solid earth. That secure vessel is an “evidence of things *not seen*” below the surface of the angry sea. And this is the Bible definition of faith. The assailed believer does not anchor to his own good resolution nor to the support of other men. He takes strong hold on the precious promises of God and the everlasting strength. Other people see and admire his fortitude, his constancy, his composure; but God alone beholds the “anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which entereth into that which is within the veil.” With a genuine Christian, the sorer the trial the stronger is the trust. When Martin Luther was struck by a heavy head sea, he used to let slip the cable of the forty-sixth Psalm. The eleventh chapter of the Hebrews is the thrilling record of a whole line of spiritual navigators whose anchor of faith never dragged.

In Great Britain no shipmaster is permitted to use an anchor which has not been tested and stamped with a government mark. If we wish to know whether our faith has the King’s mark on it, we must examine His Word. A spurious faith, full of flaws, cannot be relied on in a hurricane. The metal of our faith, so to speak, must be from God’s Scripture-foundry. It must be lowered with entire

trust upon God, and not upon ourselves. It must fasten itself to the everlasting veracity and power and love of the Almighty. Every link in the chain cable is a Divine promise. When in the darkest night we heave out this anchor we may wait confidently for the dawning of the day.

2. But no faith can avail us if it be not accompanied by godliness of practice. We require, therefore, the second anchor of a *godly conscience*. Loyalty to the principles of God's Word, loyalty to the everlasting right, must be embedded in the conscience and control the conduct, or else we drift upon the rocks. Faith without godly works is dead. It has been the lack of this loyalty of conscience to truth and honesty and right which has, in these late years, strewed the beach with the pitiable wrecks of disgraced church-members. It is not strength of intellect that saves a man, or the surroundings of society, or alliance with a church, or even orthodoxy of belief. All these have proved but cables of straw attached to anchors of clay. We must have a conscience taught of God and held by God, or we drift upon the lee shore. No one is safe in business, or safe in public life, or safe in private morality, when he loosens his life from God's commandments. God never insures

a man, even in the Church, except while his anchor is fastened to the Divine principles of right, with the cable of practical obedience.

It is not the gale which carries so many on the rocks or the quicksands. It is the silent under-current. One person drifts into dishonest practices, sanctioned by "the trade;" another into neglect of secret prayer; another feels the clutch of sensual temptations on the keel, but takes no alarm until he strikes the rock and a hideous rent is discovered in his character. The under-current of worldliness is powerful in these times and productive of no little backsliding. The world gets strong hold upon the Christian professor's keel, and his conscience loses its hold upon Christ. Silently and surely he swims, as over a sea of glass, until he *strikes!* The friendship of the world is the enmity of God.

3. That was a tedious night of peril and gloom which laid upon Paul and his shipmates; but they held out and waited for the day. Methinks one of their four anchors might well have been named *Patience*. We, too, have need of patience. It is that staying power in the soul, that "long-mindedness" (as Paul called it, in his Epistle to Colosse) which endures a continued strain without flinching.

Mark how much the Old Testament makes of "waiting patiently on God." In the New Testament the word is endurance. He that endureth to the end shall be saved. In this Jesus Christ is our illustrious example. How steadily He *bore* everything until He reached that supreme "bearing of our sins" and sorrows upon Calvary's cross !

There is no pain that I can bear,
But Thou, my Lord, hast borne it ;
No robe of scorn that I can wear,
But Thou, my Lord, hast worn it.

4. The twin sister of Patience is *Hope*. The sorely-tried patience of the tempest-tost company would have given out, except for the expectation of the morning light. We are saved by hope ; saved from utter recklessness and despair. The Christian's hope is founded on the sure, unwavering promise that, though weeping may last through the night, joy cometh in the morning. Brother believer, let the storm howl its worst and our canvas snap to ribbons. If we have committed everything to Jesus, we shall all reach land. This hope we have as an anchor sure and steadfast. But God pity the soul that is risking its eternity upon the broken anchor of a *false hope* !

A grand sight is an old weather-beaten and

battle-bruised ship—like *Old Ironsides* or Lord Nelson's *Victory*—which has ended its cruise and swung its anchors at the bow. So will Christ's fleet of triumphant souls lie in the desired haven, upon the sea of crystal, and in the silver light of Heaven's morning ! Over us will be proclaimed those glorious words : “ Here is the patience of the saints! Here are they who kept the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus ! ”

REST FOR THE RESTLESS.

IT was out of King David's weak side that there came that oft-quoted cry : "Oh ! that I had wings like a dove ; for then would I fly away and be at rest." There was a better side of the man, from which came such triumphant shouts as this : "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear." Or this one : "I have behaved, and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of its mother." Or this noble injunction : "*Rest in the Lord* and wait patiently for him."

David was, no doubt, in genuine trouble when he longed for the wings of a dove. His kingdom was in insurrection, his throne in peril, and the darling of his heart was snatching at his crown. Under these accumulated miseries the old exile from Jerusalem envied the turtle-dove which, flying past him toward the forest, could go whithersoever it would. Suppose his wish had been granted.

He might have fled from the post of duty, which was a post of danger. But would not his troubles have flown with him as fast and as far as he? Might not fresh troubles have met him in the place whither he flew?

David's prayer, though a weak one, was very natural. It is perfectly natural that we all should grow restless under trouble. It was perfectly natural for him to indulge his petted son Absalom; but how dearly he paid for his folly. It was perfectly natural for Job's wife (whom I believe to have been a good woman, and not a vixen) to have exclaimed, when her heart was crushed under a hurricane of trials: "Dost thou still retain thy integrity? Renounce God and die!" Nature in all these cases behaved badly. It was the part of grace to have behaved better. A sorry excuse is it for us who claim to be Christians that, when we do a weak or wicked thing, we so often say: "It is quite *natural* to feel or to act as we do." What is Divine grace offered to us for, unless it be to triumph over the weakness and errors of our poor wayward nature?

Thousands of us are repeating David's restless cry as often as we are put under the pressure. When the rod of chastisement makes us smart, or

a load of worries is chafing us, how often we are tempted to pray for the wings of a dove to carry us away. We hardly know or care where it be; so that it be out of the reach of the rod or the worry. Our wayward selfishness says, *Fly!* God's loving voice says, *Be still.*

Sometimes a swarm of cares and calls press in upon us in a perfect crowd, tramping on each other. Work pushes us. Interruptions annoy. Mishaps befall us. We take these accumulated vexations so *hard* and chafe so under the friction. We borrow fresh troubles from the morrow, and anticipate worse things to come. Under this sharp strain, faith and fortitude give way, and we cry out in a sort of restless despair: "Oh! for wings to fly away and be at rest."

When in this state of feeling — so perfectly natural and yet so unworthy of a Christian—we frequently get a message from our Heavenly Father. Perhaps we open our Bibles and read such words as these: "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him." Or we light upon these words: "Beloved, count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience." Once when I was dreadfully harassed by a doubt whether I should remain in a certain

pulpit or go to a very inviting one, eight hundred miles away, I opened Cecil's wise book of practical thoughts, and my eyes fell on these "pat" and pithy words: "Taking new steps in life are very serious dangers, especially if in our motives there be any mixture of ambition. 'Wherefore *gaddest thou about* to change thy way?'" Now I did not know before that there was such a passage in the Bible. I turned to the second chapter of Jeremiah, and found it there, though translated a little differently. I resolved at once not to "gad about" or change my field of labour, and have thanked God for that timely Scripture hint ever since.

The reader of this chapter will recall, probably, just such experiences of his own. He was longing to run away from school, because God gave him hard lessons to learn, and sometimes used the rod. Or he was in "the fining pot" of trial, and the fire burned hot. There was a terrible temptation to rebel and to try to escape from the fiery ordeal. But, if you had been allowed your own way, your silver never would have been refined or the dross purged out of your character. When we were children, and suffered from a decayed tooth, the sight of the dentist's ugly instrument made us start to run. But kind old mother said: "Sit down

and take it bravely. It will soon be out, and then you will feel better."

The same process has been gone through hundreds of times since. God was using the lancet, and we tried to escape from it. Temporary relief, immediate ease, was what we wanted, instead of permanent benefit. Running away would only have postponed the difficulty or retarded the cure. We needed to be *kept still* until God had got through with His surgery ; for it is not the escape from discipline or the shirking of painful loads that makes a Christian strong. That was a very selfish and cowardly prayer of the old royal refugee : "Oh ! that I had wings like a dove to fly away." He might better have asked for strength from heaven to stand fast and firm, like an anvil when it is smitten heavily. It is usually a piece of moral cowardice when we run from a hard place to an easy one, or from a dangerous post to a snugly-sheltered one. Many lives become utter failures from the simple lack of courage.

II. Another point must not be forgotten. The changes which we make from the motive of self-indulgence or of sheer restlessness are seldom changes for the better. The weary sufferer begs to be carried into another room ; but he carries his

limbs. It is hard to identify more than three or four places now on which we are certain that Christ set His foot. One of these is the well's mouth at Sychar. A second is the hilltop above Nazareth. The third is that still beaten road that leads over Olivet to the ruined village of Bethany.

It was on that roadside that Jesus was sitting when He beheld guilty Jerusalem and wept over it. It was about that same spot where He sat and delivered that wonderful prophetic discourse (in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew) on the Tuesday of His passion week. He slept that night at Bethany, on the eastern slope of the mountain. On the next day, as the conspirators were lying in wait for Him, He did not enter Jerusalem at all. Probably He passed it in deep retirement upon Olivet, communing with His Heavenly Father, and preparing silently for that tremendous tragedy which should soon cast its pall of midday darkness over the city's streets and Calvary's altar of sacrifice. He needed répose. That day He dwelt apart. And, as Dr. Farrar eloquently says: "On that Wednesday night He lay down for the last time on earth. On the Thursday morning He awoke, never to sleep again." We must not think of Jesus as living with His disciples after the manner of men

during the forty days between His crucifixion and His ascension. His public work was over. He only gave His disciples an occasional interview, and His last appearance among them was that memorable and sublime moment when He parted from them on the eastern brow of Olivet, and a "cloud received Him out of their sight."

I have reviewed this connection of our Lord with that sacred spot, not only for its historic interest, but for its spiritual suggestions. If Jesus sought a place for quiet meditation and for retirement from the city's bustle and Babel noises, every Christian should have his Olivet also. Those of us who live in large towns are apt to live at high pressure. The rural Christian has the scenery and the solitudes of God's great wide country about him. But in the bustling, bewildering, driving, roaring city how difficult it is to "dwell apart." Where and how can we escape the roar and the contagion of excitements? Where shall we find a Hermon or a Horeb, a brook Cherith or a Mount of Olives?

From early morn until bedtime we city folk are exposed to the whirl. The world meets us at the breakfast-table in the columns of the morning journal. We snatch the record of fires and floods,

telegrams and trials, with our cup of coffee. After a hurried meal we launch out into the crowded day. Engagements press. Care collars the tradesman, the lawyer, and in fact, every man, as soon as he gets into the street. When he reaches his place of business his table is probably piled with letters demanding prompt reply. Customers pour in or patrons wait; or, even if one earns his bread on a fourth floor, the "elevator" brings the street up to his door. The day's furnace of excitement is kindled in the morning and glows at a white heat until the crowded omnibus or rail-car carries the weary man out of it toward the sunset. I know of Christian merchants with whom I can never catch a five minutes' important conversation without keeping one or more waiting impatiently behind me. After such bustling days come the late dinner, the evening paper, the evening visitors, the public entertainments, and, in some happy cases, the evening prayer-meeting in God's house. Amid all this maelstrom of excitement how little chance for quiet introspection, calm meditation, or devout fellowship with Jesus!

Even the Sabbath is too often a day of overtaxing strain upon body and mind. Every good thing has its attendant evils; and the evil attendant

upon the Sabbath arrangements of many active Christians is that they are deprived of nearly all opportunity for repose of mind, or for study of their own hearts or of God's precious word. With many good people there is more preaching than praying or thinking, more headwork than heartwork, more swallowing of truth than digestion. They hear tenfold more than they heed or remember. And still the cormorant cry is for more sermons, sermons, sermons. To such people—and their name is legion—the excitements of the week simply give place to the religious excitements of God's day, and through them all the immortal soul finds too little converse either with itself or with God. If Jesus needed an Olivet for quiet communion and prayer, surely His earthly followers need one still more.

Can none be found? Can city Christians discover no times or places for meditation, prayer, Bible study, or heart converse with their Lord? Yes; they may, if they so determine. I know of a busy but most pious merchant who rises early, and so *hems* the day with a good hour over his Bible and on his knees that it does not *ravel* out into frivolity or undue conformity to the world. I know of others who had a place for secret prayer at

noonday in the loft of their warehouses. Some catch a half-hour of refreshment in the noon prayer-meeting. Others rigidly keep quiet evening hours for *bathing* their souls. No Christian can afford to live constantly in the whirl. Daniel needed to have an Olivet in his chamber, amid Babylon's roar and impiety. Peter found his on a housetop in Joppa. Let every child of Jesus resolve that he *will* have a place and a time for meeting his dear Master alone, and he will go forth from such holy interviews with his face shining and his strength renewed. Our Olivets will prepare us for that mount of heavenly glory where we shall see Jesus as He is.

THE FACE TOWARDS JERUSALEM.

EVERY step of the Lord Jesus Christ left a footprint for His followers to study. We should be looking for these footprints of our Master and endeavour to tread in them ourselves. Every word and act of Jesus has a spiritual significance for us. For example, we find a vitally important truth—yes, several of them—wrapped up in that incident recorded in the ninth chapter of St. Luke.

Jesus had just bade farewell to Galilee and set out on His final journey to Jerusalem. The time for Him to be offered and to “be received up” was at hand. So He steadfastly set His face toward Jerusalem, although He knew that for Him were being prepared a cruel mockery and an ignominious, bloody death. As soon as He had crossed the hills on the southern border of Galilee he reached the pretty Samaritan village of El-Gannim (or “Fountain of Gardens”). He comes attended by a multitude of followers, and asks for food and

lodging over night in the village. But the bitterly bigoted Samaritans of the little town insultingly refuse Him shelter, because "his face was as though he would go to *Jerusalem*." Rudely repulsed, He leaves the churlish inhabitants on His flank and moves on, by another route, toward the "City of the Great King."

Now this incident, which is too often overlooked as unimportant, has some suggestive lessons to the Christian. It teaches us, in the first place, that we should never shrink from a path of duty, however many be the obstacles we may encounter. Jesus had an errand of sublime self-sacrifice to be performed at Jerusalem, and He was not to be diverted from it by any obstruction that human enmity could lay across His path. Brethren, you and I often find the line of duty made harder by irritating oppositions—often, too, from the very people whom we aim to benefit. The temptation is strong to invoke a malediction on our opposers (as John and James did upon the foolish bigots of the Samaritan village). The Master's example teaches us to march unflinchingly forward in the path of duty, with our faces steadfastly set toward God. This is not an age of heroic Christianity. There is more pulp than pluck in the average Christian professor, when self-denial

is required. The men and women who not only rejoice in doing their duty for Christ, but even rejoice in overcoming uncomfortable obstacles in the doing it, are quite too scarce. The piety that is most needed is a piety that will stand a pinch ; a piety that would rather eat an honest crust than fare sumptuously on fraud ; a piety that can work up stream against currents ; a piety that sets its face like a flint in the straight, narrow road of righteousness.

2. Such an uncompromising religion must not expect any help or hospitality from the world. Jesus found Himself on hostile soil as soon as He set foot in Samaria. The Christian also must reach the new Jerusalem by a straight march through an enemy's country.

This world is not a friend to grace,
To help us on to God.

This world has hated Me, and it will hate you, was Christ's fair warning to His disciples. It is as true now as it was then, that whosoever will be the uncompromising friend of Christ will be treated as an enemy by those who despise the religion of the Cross. The piety that is not ashamed to be nicknamed "Puritanical" is not popular in this world,

and never will be until the Millennium. Yet, to keep on good terms with the world, and at the same time not to "break" with the Lord Jesus Christ, is the absurd and abortive endeavour of too many who profess and call themselves Christians. Bunyan describes this style of character in "Mr. Facing-both-ways." This class hanker after all the fashions and follies of Vanity Fair, aim to get their fill of sinful enjoyments, that can be indulged in without too much public scandal; and yet claim to be the Lord's pilgrims, bound toward the Celestial City. This wretched attempt at compromise and conformity only provokes the contempt of the world's people and the holy indignation of God. A Christian never wins the world by going over to it. "Come out and be ye separate!" is Christ's solemn injunction. True godliness of life and the true enjoyment of life both depend upon a hearty, conscientious obedience to Christ's commandments. No man can possibly serve two opposing masters. Now, if there be a single backsliding reader of this chapter, who has got himself entangled in sinful compliances and has drifted off into conformity with the world, let me exhort him to begin this new year by setting his face like a flint toward Jerusalem.

Backsliding always begins with getting our faces away from Jesus. Whither the face looks the footsteps tend. While Paul was "looking unto Jesus" he kept on pressing toward the heavenly prize. As soon as we cease to keep our eye on God's Word as our rule of daily conduct, on Christ's cross as our only hope of salvation, and on Christ's service as our chief end of life, we begin to backslide. No Christian's countenance can shine when it is turned away from his Saviour. No awakened sinner can ever hope to obtain peace and Divine help for a better life as long as he looks back longingly towards the sins of Sodom. "Remember Lot's wife."

3. It was probably about the time of His repulse by the Samaritans that Jesus delivered those solemn injunctions to His followers about taking up their cross daily, if they would be His disciples. He drew a sharp line and made a clean issue. Whoever did not care more for Him and His gospel than for kindred and property, for houses and lands and popularity, was not worthy of a place in His kingdom. There was to be no wavering. The man who put his hand to the plough and *looked back* was not fit for the kingdom of God. In the original Greek the word is "not *well put*" for the

kingdom. This implies that his feet are on the solid rock, and that he stands well in his shoes, with his face set like a flint toward God. All the most effective characters in the Bible—Daniel in Babylon, Elijah before Ahab, Peter before the council, and Paul at Nero's bar—were men of this fibre. Their eyes looked only one way, and they looked clearly. They could not be cajoled or frightened. Their countenances—like the countenance of Stephen when it was upturned toward heaven—shone as an angel's, in the light of God.

It is a religion of this fibre that the times demand. We need more of the Christianity that steadfastly sets its face toward Christ's Word and holy will. An ungodly world will be compelled to look at such Christly living as at “the sun shining in its strength.” God loves to look at those who carry Jesus in their faces. Of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Such living brings happy dying. Good Dean Alford asked that it might be inscribed on his tombstone : “This is the inn of a traveller on his way to Jerusalem.” To many of us this may be the last year on earth. Let us determine to so live that, when Death calls our names on his roll, we may be found with our faces steadfastly set towards “Jerusalem the Golden.”

NEARER TO GOD.

THREE is many a one who can sing “Nearer, my God, to Thee,” and yet never makes that the daily prayer of the heart and the daily endeavour of the life. Yet God is constantly saying to every one of us: “Draw nigh unto me, and I will draw nigh unto you.” This is the inviting command and the commanding invitation to every sinner who is still self-exiled into the far country of impenitence. The first step of the sinner must be to arise and go to his Father. God seeks the sinner, and then, under the drawings of the Holy Spirit, the sinner seeks God. There is a double finding. The seeking Shepherd finds the wanderer, and the wanderer finds Jesus. He becomes the Way, the Truth, the Life. Those who were “afar off are thus made nigh by the blood of Christ.” This is the Bible process of conversion; and what is true of the beginning is equally true of the whole subsequent experience of a genuine Chris-

tian life. It is a perpetual drawing nigh unto God.

The eighth verse of the fourth chapter of James is a signal-text that ought to be hoisted very often from every pulpit. It should be kept constantly flying. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." It is the Divine call to prayer, the call to return from backsliding, the call to consecration of ourselves and to a daily communion with our Heavenly Father. The sin and the shame of too many of us who profess and call ourselves Christians is that we live too far from God. Hence our weakness ; hence comes the secret declension into a low, formal, juiceless type of religion. Here, too, lies the reason for the fall of hundreds into open disgrace. No man ever falls who lives near to Jesus.

I. If you ask what we gain by drawing nigh to God, I would answer that we gain new strength. The strength of yesterday will not suffice for to-day, any more than yesterday's food will support me if I neglected my meal this morning. God means that we shall be kept in constant dependence. Therefore He metes out "strength equal to the day." No Christian can live on an old experience, or a covenant made in years gone by, or on the Divine

help that was furnished him when he had his last encounter with the Tempter. A new trial awaits Peter, and if Peter does not ask and secure the strength for the conflict then waging, he is struck down to the dust. Laodicea's Christians were once sound. They ceased to live near God, and He "spewed them out of his mouth."

II. The only place of security is in close heart-connection with God. The soldier who keeps the ranks on the march, or within the citadel during the assault, is commonly safe; the "stragglers" fall into the hands of the enemy. A lamentable number of those enrolled on our church records belong to this class. Among this class of backsliders are found the victims of Satan—the men who betray fiduciary trusts; the weak-kneed time-servers, who succumb in times of hard pressure for want of principle; the votaries of fashion, who go from the communion-table to the haunts of revelry to disgrace their Master. There is no need that a Christian should ever fall, or ever relapse into a cold, worldly, faithless condition for a single day. If we live close to God, all the powers of hell cannot harm us. We shall be ever under His eye. We shall walk in the light, and our conscience will never be befogged. God will "hide us in the

secret of his pavilion." He will set our feet upon the rock.

III. We wonder sometimes why certain people of our acquaintance shine with such a steady lustre of piety. Their spiritual influence is far out of proportion to their talents, or mental culture, or social advantages. But the cause of their superior brightness is the same that has made Venus and Mars so brilliant in the evening heavens. While mighty Saturn and Neptune were almost invisible, through their remoteness from the sun, the two small planets which revolve close to the source of light become luminaries of the first rank. A very humble Christian may become a burning and a shining light in his church and in society if his orbit is very near to Christ. He reflects Christ in his every-day conduct. It is only as he recedes from the Sun of Righteousness that the Christian becomes either invisible, or sheds the baneful influence of a wandering star.

There are many who desire to be useful workers for the salvation of souls, and yet lose sight of the fact that they must draw nigh to God, and live nigh to God, if they would draw others. No parent can do anything for the conversion of his child if he himself lives away from God. His appeals will

disgust his children as mere cant. Power to win souls is derived from close living contact with the Divine Source of all power. When I was a student at Princeton, Professor Henry had so constructed a huge bar of iron, bent into the form of a horseshoe, that it used to hang suspended from another iron bar above it. Not only did it hang there, but it upheld 4,000 pounds weight attached to it! That horseshoe magnet was not welded or glued to the metal above it; but through the iron wire coiled around it there ran a subtle current of electricity from a galvanic battery. Stop the flow of the current one instant, and the huge horseshoe dropped. So does all the *lifting power* of a Christian come from the currents of spiritual influence which flow into his heart from the Living Jesus. The strength of the Almighty One enters into the believer. If his connection with Christ is cut off, in an instant he becomes as weak as any other man.

Charles G. Finney used to discover that sometimes his preaching was mighty in its influence to convict and convert sinners. At other times he seemed to be firing only blank cartridges. The results depended entirely upon his own spiritual condition, upon his nearness to or his absence from God. When he was in close communion with

God, the currents of power were mighty and irresistible. When his connection with the Lord ceased, either through unbelief or unworthy living, his lifting power was gone. Drawing nigh to God was invariably the most effectual way to draw the impenitent.

The concentrating and culminating act of drawing nigh to the Lord is prayer. To this especial exercise of the soul James refers, and what a happy description of prayer it is. The longing soul lays hold on God, clings to Him, and "will not let him go" except the blessing come. So Jacob wrestled. So the Canaanitish woman grasped the Saviour and would not be shaken off. While listening to George Müller, it has seemed to me that his prayers are of this simple, sincere, clinging character. *He holds on to God.* The old Scotch door-keeper used to say, "There's nae gude done, John, till ye get into the close grups."

Not only successful prayer comes from close approaches to God (through Jesus the Intercessor), but all godly living likewise. The world is a powerful magnet, and we cannot serve two masters. The demand of the hour is for a Christlike Church, honest, truthful, fearless, living near to God, and keeping His commandments. To such a

Church God will "draw nigh" in wonderful blessings. He will reveal Himself as He does not to the world.

I have heard of a monk who, in his cell, had a glorious vision of Jesus revealed to him. Just then a bell rang, which called him away to distribute loaves among the poor beggars at the gate. He was sorely tried as to whether he should lose a scene so inspiring. He went to his act of mercy; and when he came back the vision remained, more glorious than ever. Brethren, the bell that calls us to duty and to the loving service of our Lord is the bell that calls us to the most joyful views of His countenance. When we draw nigh to Him in humble obedience, He draws nigh to us in the full-orbed brightness of His favour.

TREASURES IN HEAVEN.

IT seems like investing one's good things a long way off to be "laying up treasures in heaven." But this is a mistake. Heaven is very near to God's children. The leagues thither are few and short—shortening every hour. Heaven is begun here by a life of faith. It is a state, as well as a place. The converted soul by regeneration comes into a new condition toward God, and this condition is called the "kingdom of heaven" in more than one Bible passage. When two pure hearts begin to love, it is the beginning of wedlock. Hands are not joined or the ring given, but the core-idea of wedlock is reached, which is unselfish heart-love. Heaven as a state of reconciliation to God, and of love for Him who first loved us, is begun on earth. Heaven as the actual abode of the redeemed is very near; just behind the veil it lies; every moment that veil disappears to one and another, and they are there! They are amid the

treasures at God's right hand. A share in those treasures belongs to every true and earnest follower of Jesus.

They are of various kinds and character. The everlasting hopes of the believer belong to these treasures. Paul exclaimed, with holy confidence : "I know whom I have believed, and that he is able to *keep* that which I have committed to him against that day." The great apostle had made Jesus his trustee. He had lodged his soul's affections and hopes all in Christ's hands, and when he reached heaven he knew that he should find the deposit safe. He had laid up nothing on earth for the moth or the thief. All his investments were spiritual, and Jesus had the charge of them. So may every true Christian, whether in mansion or in lowly hut, congratulate himself that what is dearest to him is in the keeping of his Saviour.

The spiritual results of Paul's life were in heaven. The results of my own poor life are there. Brother, yours are there. And they will be found to have increased through earthly losses. Whatever we give up for Jesus's sake increases our heavenly treasure. The money which is sacrificed in order to keep a good conscience adds to our heavenly wealth. Keeping often impoverishes. Giving up

enriches. "He that saveth his life shall lose it; he that loseth his life for my sake and the Gospel's shall find it"—in heaven. Whatever we lay *down* here in order to please Jesus will be "laid up" to our account yonder. God is a faithful trustee. He keeps his book of remembrance. He will reward every one according as his work shall be. The wise employment of the ten talents or the two talents will be fairly recompensed. When we speak of salvation as by grace and not "of works," we must not forget that other truth, that God will judge us all according to our works. They will be laid up there. If a sinner's wages are paid in hell, a Christian's wages are paid in heaven. How rich some of Christ's millionaires will be! Paul will have a magnificent inheritance. All that he gave up of earthly pelf, profit, fame, ease, power, emolument, will stand to his credit there. All the mighty service he wrought for human souls will be to him a shining crown. Agrippa will be glad to change thrones with him then. John Bunyan, when in jail, comforted himself with the thought that he had "rich lordships" in those souls which he had led to Jesus. What a Crœsus the old tinker will be when he gets in full possession of his inheritance! How many thousands will come

and thank John Bunyan for leading them to heaven!

I love to think of Robert Raikes as surrounded by hosts of Sunday-school children in Paradise. They will be a part of his treasures, as well as Christ's treasures, in heaven. To John Elliott the converted Indian will be a star in his crown. Wilberforce will be enriched by the salvation of liberated bondmen, and Franke will be the happier when he finds some of his orphans before the throne. Faithful pastors, who gave up all prospect of worldly emolument in order to spend and be spent for Christ, will discover that they have made wise investments in the "better country." The surrenders made here become rich possessions yonder. When we read lately that an Evangelist had refused to accept a large gift, lest his spiritual influence might be curtailed, we said: "That is a good investment for Christ. He has put that thousand pounds out at interest for eternity."

The gains are very steady up there. Poor city missionaries and Biblewomen and frontier preachers and godly needle-women have their savings banks at God's right hand. Those banks never break. The only change in heavenly treasures is from their enlargement. There is no corruption within and

no consumption from without. The moth never gnaws there and the burglar never breaks in to steal. It is impossible to compute what treasures every faithful Christian may be storing away for his long lifetime in glory. God is a faithful trustee. He keeps his "record on high"; and each good deed of love, each act of self-denial, each surrender of pride or selfishness or human applause for Jesus's sake, will find sure remembrance there. They all come up "as a memorial before God."

Now, why will not some of my readers who are troubled about finding "*safe investments*" just listen to the inducements which Jesus holds out? He said once to an aspiring young man: "Give up all thou hast and come and follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." To-day he makes the same proclamation. "Treasure in heaven!" What is it? Something safer than anything you can toil for here. What is it? Something more abundant than anything you can earn in gold or greenbacks. What is it? Something more enduring than mines or broad acres. It is the only *real* estate in the universe. If you will lay down self at Jesus's feet and accept Him and His service, you will become part owner of heaven. You will be a joint heir of Him who saith: "All

that the Father hath is mine." All that you give up for Jesus will be laid up to your account. The souls you lead to Jesus will compose the jewelry of your crown. Death strips the selfish, greedy sinner of his treasure, and sends him into eternity bankrupt. But death will unlock to you the gateway of your Father's house, and you will come into an inheritance that fadeth not away.

LIGHT AT EVENING-TIME.

God's Word is an inexhaustible jewel-bed. What a gem of the first water is this beautiful text : "At evening-time it shall be light !" Like a many-sided diamond, it flashes out as many truths as it has polished sides. As the diamond has the quality of glistening in dim and darksome places, so this passage shines brightly in seasons of trouble and despondency. Old people may well put on their spectacles of faith and see what a rare and precious verse it is. The people of God who are under a cloud may also find in it the foretoken of better things to come.

The passage gleams out from one of the olden Jewish prophets—from the prophecies of Zechariah, of whom we know very little, except that he flourished about the time of the return from Babylon, 520 years before Christ's advent. He is that cheerful seer who pictures the streets of Jerusalem as yet to be filled with old men leaning

on their staffs and little boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. The text occurs at the close of a remarkable passage, which reads as follows in a close translation: "And it shall be in that day that there shall not be the light of the glittering orbs, but densely thick darkness. But there shall be *one* day (it is known to Jehovah) when it shall not be day *and* night; for at evening-time it shall be light."

Many Bible scholars count this passage to be clearly prophetic of the Millennium. Our good brothers Tyng and Clark, with all the literalistic school, quote it as predicting Christ's personal reign, when His "feet shall again stand on the Mount of Olives." Into that controversy we shall not enter, being quite satisfied that, while of that day and hour knoweth no man, yet "it is known to Jehovah." The beautiful text is so rich in spiritual suggestions that we are quite satisfied to catch some of the gleamings of the diamond.

I. The very essence of *hope* is in this inspiring verse. Some of us may recall a weary climb from the Vale of Zermatt up the rough acclivities of the Riffelberg, amid chilling mists and swirling gusts of tempest. The icy vapours penetrated to the marrow of our bones. At the Riffel all was blind-

ing fog. We pushed on and upward, until, as we stood upon the Gorner Grat, the mighty caravan of clouds moved off and left the "body of the heavens in its clearness." Yonder rose the Weisshorn, a pyramid of silver, and the peaks of Monte Rosa flashed in crimson and gold. We had been suffocated in storm and fog all day, but *at evening-time it was light.*

This has been the ten thousand times repeated experience of God's children. Grey-haired Jacob, in his loneliness, wails out: "Joseph is dead; Simeon is dead; now they take Benjamin also. All these things are against me." Presently the returning cavalcade arrives to tell him that Joseph is governor of Egypt, and that he is invited to come and spend his sunset of life in the best of the land that Pharaoh can offer. A long, troubled day has the patriarch weathered through; but at evening-time it is light. It is a part of God's discipline with us to hide His throne in clouds and darkness. The office of faith is to hold fast to the fact that behind those clouds a loving Father dwells upon that throne. It is the office of hope to look for the clearing of the clouds by-and-by. If we had no storms, we should never appreciate the blue sky. The trial of the tempest is the

preparation for the warm afterglow of sunshine. Blind unbelief is continually railing at God, charging Him with cruelty, and scouting the idea of a special providence of all-wise love. But faith whispers: "Think it not strange, or as though some strange thing happened unto thee. God sceth the end from the beginning. To the upright there ariseth light in darkness. *All* things work together for good to them that love Him." Hope bids us push on and upward. Only keep pressing higher and closer to Jesus, instead of wandering downward into doubt and sullen despair. Push upward, and you will

"Hear Hope singing, sweetly singing,
Softly in an undertone,
Singing as if God had taught her
It is better further on."

The darkness is thick about thee now, my brother; but the Christian life is a walk of faith. God never deceives His children. If we but keep fast hold to the Guiding Hand, we shall find the road to be not one step longer or harder than is best for us. God has piloted every saint through this very road and up these very hills of difficulty. It will be better further on. Every chastening of a believer's soul lies at the end of a painful ordeal,

Every success worth the having lies at the end of brave, protracted toil. Twenty years of storm must be battled through by Wilberforce and Clarkson before negro emancipation is enacted by the British Parliament. At evening-time the sky was crimsoned with the flush of victory.

II. This passage has a beautiful application to a Christian old age. Many people have a silly dread of growing old, and look upon grey hairs as a standing libel. But, if life is well spent, its Indian summer ought to bring a full granary and a golden leaf. Bunyan introduces his Pilgrim to a Land of Beulah, where flowers of rare beauty grow, and where breezes from the Celestial City fan the furrowed cheek. The spiritual light at the gloaming of life becomes mellower ; it is strained of mists and impurities. The aged believer seems to see deeper into God's Word and further into God's heaven. Not every human life has a golden sunset. Some suns go down under a cloud. At evening-time it is cold and dark. I have been looking lately at the testimonies left by two celebrated men who died during my boyhood. One of them was the king of novelists ; the other was the king of philanthropists. Both had lost their fortunes and lost their health.

The novelist wrote as follows: "The old post-chaise gets more shattered at every turn of the wheel. Windows will not pull up; doors refuse to open and shut. Sickesses come thicker and faster; friends become fewer and fewer. Death has closed the long, dark avenue upon early loves and friendships. I look at them as through the grated door of a burial-place, filled with monuments of those once dear to me. I shall never see the threescore and ten, and shall be summed up at a discount." Ah! that is not a cheerful sunset of a splendid literary career. At evening-time it looks gloomy, and the air smells of the sepulchre.

Listen now to the old Christian philanthropist, whose inner life was hid with Christ in God. He writes: "I can scarce understand why my life is spared so long, except it be to show that a man can be just as happy without a fortune as with one. Sailors on a voyage drink to 'friends astern' till they are half-way across; and after that it is 'friends ahead.' With me it has been 'friends ahead' for many a year." The veteran pilgrim was getting nearer home. The Sun of Righteousness flooded his western sky. At evening-time it was light.

III. What a contrast there is between the death-

bed of the impenitent and that of the adopted child of God, whose hope is anchored to Jesus. The one is dark—a fearful looking forward to a wrath to come. The other is the earnest expectation of an endless day which lies beyond the glorious sunset. I have just come from the sick-room of a woman whose life is ebbing away amid intense bodily sufferings. It is one of the most cheerful spots in this sorrow-laden world. Jesus is watching by that bedside. He administers the cordials. He stays up that sinking head. "I am with you always" is to her the promise and fore-token of that other state of joy, "where I am ye shall be also." At evening-time that chamber of death *is light!*

KNOWING OUR FRIENDS IN HEAVEN.

THREE is not enough in the Bible about heaven to satisfy our curiosity, but there is quite enough to satisfy a reasonable faith. It is certainly more than a happy condition of glorified spirits. It is a holy place. Such expressions as "a city with foundations," a "building" or structure of God, and a "habitation," all point to a definite locality. Certain characteristics of the abode of the blessed are clearly indicated. It is a rest that remaineth for the people of God. No sin can penetrate it, or anything whatever that defileth. Neither shall any of its inhabitants suffer from sickness or pain. Knowledge shall be commensurate with the enlarged powers of the glorified soul. We shall know even as we are known. Companionship with the spirits of the just made perfect will furnish endless variety and unbroken harmony of social intercourse. Above all, we shall see God, and not die.

These are among the most distinct truths which the Scriptures reveal concerning that Jerusalem the Golden, whose walls are like unto precious stones, and whose gates to orient pearls. For whom is this celestial habitation prepared? For beings of other worlds, or for those occupants of this globe whom Jesus hath redeemed unto Himself? Certainly the latter. Christ says to His disciples, "I go to prepare a place *for you*." Where He is, He desires that His own shall be also. The occupants of heaven shall be those who were once occupants of this sinful earth. The transfer from earth to heaven does not (according to the only Book which reveals heaven) destroy personal identity. On the contrary, God's Word assumes continually that this identity will be preserved. The same living organism, the same characteristics which made the patriarch Abraham a different man from everybody else in Chaldæa, will make Abraham a different person from any one else in heaven. These physical and mental traits enabled his neighbours in "Ur" to recognize him. He has carried with him into the eternal world also such personal characteristics, that he is recognizable there. According to Christ's statement, the rich man "saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom." He also declared that the righteous will

yet sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in that celestial kingdom. It is preposterous to imagine that these three persons are some other persons than those who passed by those names on earth. No matter what change death and the resurrection may produce on the forms or organisms known as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The body here changes by chemical processes, so that there are entirely new particles in my physical form from what were there six or seven years ago. Yet I am the same person. My individuality is not changed in the slightest degree. Lincoln the nursing infant and Lincoln the noble president were the same individual.

In like manner Paul before the throne is, and inevitably must be, the identical Paul who preached at Athens and was martyred at Rome. When he longed to "depart and be with Christ" he expected to be not somebody else, but the same individual. Môses died fifteen centuries before the advent of Jesus Christ. Yet there was a personality still existing, who appeared at the time of Christ's transfiguration on the mount, and who was addressed by Him as Moses. The prophet Elijah, who had died seven hundred years before, was there also. When the great apostle speaks of his Thessalonian

converts as his “glory and joy in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ,” he assuredly expected to meet the same persons in heaven that he had laboured with in Thessalonica. If they were not the same people, and if he could not meet them there, how could they be to him a “crown” or a “joy”?

This point is clearly in accordance with Scripture and with common sense. Whatever change may be produced by death, personal identity will not be altered by one jot or tittle. The sinner who sins here will be the same sinner who will be punished in the world of woe. The believer who is welcomed with the glad salute, “Come, thou blessed of my Father!” will be the same person who on earth had done the Father’s bidding. Without this preservation of perfect identity the whole idea of a future retribution of rewards and punishments would be an absurd impossibility.

If identity is preserved in eternity, will the faculty of memory also survive the grave? Undoubtedly it will. The obliteration of memory would amount to a partial destruction of the individual. It would remove some of heaven’s richest enjoyments. If I cannot remember what my Redeemer has done and suffered for me, how can I join in the ever “new

song" of grateful praise before His throne? The obliteration of memory would take away the severest and the bitterest of sin's just retributions in hell. Upon this point the description of Lazarus and of the selfish rich man "in torment" throws a distinct light; for Abraham said, "Son, *remember* that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things."

Put now together these two facts: (1) personal identity is not lost in eternity, and (2) memory remains also unimpaired. It follows inevitably that we shall know each other in heaven. When David cried out over his dead boy, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me!" that bereaved father expected to meet again the child whose spirit had flown home to God. Certainly we shall not be more stupid in heaven than we are on earth. If I could recognize such a person as Chalmers in his pulpit, I cannot fail to recognize that same servant of God in his celestial apparelling. Martin Luther, in his "Table Talks," makes much of this intercourse with father and mother and kindred in the heavenly home. Sharp, unpoetic old Doctor Emmons used to say, "I hope to have some talks with the Apostle Paul in heaven." And who of us would not experience a fearful shock, even amid the hallelujah raptures of Paradise, if the sweet

affections of kinship were to be obliterated for ever? Surely God would not so punish those whom He loves to bless.

That infants will be doomed to the everlasting weakness and helplessness and ignorance of infancy, seems, to my mind, impossible. No mother would ever want to see her darling babe stunted to an unchanged babyhood even here. It would become a pitiable monstrosity. Half the charm of childhood is its constant growth; its delightful openings, like the rosebud, to new thought and development. The idea of an undeveloped infancy in heaven would be almost a libel upon the Creator! My darling boy will be none the less my own child in the "Father's House" because (like another child at Nazareth) he has increased in stature and knowledge, and in favour with God and man. That I shall know him there—if God's rich grace doth bring me there—I have no more doubt of than I have of the existence of a heavenly rest. Good Dean Alford struck a chord in every Christian heart when he sang:—

Oh! then what raptured greetings,
On heaven's happy shore;
What knitting severed friendships up,
Where partings are no more!

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